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## PREFACE.

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A GLANCE at the contents of this Volume will show that it does not fulfil the intentions avowed in the preface to the former volume. It does not refer specially to the Ministry of Christ, or to the Pauline gospel: much less does it pretend to investigate the proper definition of Christianity. The hope of treating these subjects, in a manner at all suitable to my estimate of them, still recedes into the distance. The materials indeed are not wholly unprovided; or I should not have ventured on the pledge which still waits to be redeemed: but a growing sense of their inadequacy makes me wonder that I could ever think them worthy of my reader's acceptance; and induces me to withhold them, till the deficiencies can be in some measure supplied. Should the needful leisure never arrive, or should I finally esteem myself not qualified for the task to which, perhaps with presumptuous earnestness, I once aspired, I shall indeed regret my inconsiderate promise, but be clear of reproach for less considerate performance.

Though however the present volume, like its predecessor, is altogether practical and unsystematic, there is a sense in which it may be regarded as a step towards the completion of the original design. The prevalent differences of belief on questions of theology have their secret foundation in different philosophies of religion: and these philosophies are the product of moral expe-

rience and self-scrutiny, so as always to reflect the conception of human nature most familiar to the disciple's mind. Hence, controversies apparently historical cannot be settled by appeal to history alone: no metaphysical disputes, by metaphysics only; but will ultimately resort for their answer to the sentiments and affections awakened into predominant activity by the literature, the teachings, and the social condition of the age. No one can observe the changes of faith and the causes which determine them, without discovering, that the order of fact reverses the order of theory; that the feelings of men must be changed in detail, their perceptions be awakened in fresh directions, their tastes be drawn by new admirations, before any reasoning can avail to establish an altered system of religious thought. Who can suppose that the different estimates made of the authority of Scripture are really the result of historical research, and are simply so many varieties of critical judgment? Is it not obvious that the sacred writings are, in every case, allowed to retain precisely the residue of authority which, according to the believer's view of our nature and our life, is unsupplied from any other source? If this be so, the psychology of religion must have precedence—I do not say in dignity, but in time,—of its documentary criticism: and every word faithfully spoken from the consciousness of a living man contributes a preliminary to the inquiry as to the inspiration of ancient books. I am not ashamed to confess, that extensive and, in the end, systematic changes in the opinions I derived from sect and education, have had no higher origin than self-examination and reflection,—a more careful interrogation of that internal experience, of which the superficial interpretation is so seductive to indolence and so prolific in error. And possibly, a volume like the present, should it at all awaken in others the sentiments from which it proceeds in myself, may indirectly *lead to the recognition*, on their proper evidence of conscious-

ness, of those very truths, which, in a more systematic work, I could only aim to protect from the objections of philosophy, and reconcile with the results of criticism.

I have preserved what I have to say in its original form of discourses prepared for the pulpit. I have always felt indignant with those preachers who, when they resort to the press, seem ashamed of their vocation, and disguise, under new shapes and names, the materials originally embodied in Sermons. I should as soon think of turning a sonnet into an epistle, a ballad into a review, or a dirge into an obituary. It must be a bad sermon that can be made into a good treatise, or even a good "Oration." In virtue of the close affinity, perhaps ultimate identity, of Religion and Poetry, preaching is essentially a lyric expression of the soul, an utterance of meditation in sorrow, hope, love, and joy, from a representative of the human heart in its divine relations. In proportion as we quit this view, and prominently introduce the idea of a preceptive and monitory function, we retreat from the true prophetic interpretation of the office back into the old *sacerdotal*:—or (what is not perhaps so different a distinction as it may appear) from the properly *religious* to the simply *moral*. A ministry of mere instruction and persuasion, which addresses itself primarily to the Understanding and the Will, which deals mainly with facts and reasonings, with hopes and fears, may furnish us with the expositions of the lecture-room, the commandments of the altar, the casuistry of the confessional: but it falls short of that true "testimony of God," that personal effusion of conscience and affection, which distinguishes the reformed *preaching* from the catholic *homily*. Were this distinction duly apprehended, there would be a less eager demand for extemporaneous preaching; which may be the vehicle of admirable disquisitions, convincing arguments, impressive ~~speeches~~; but is as little likely to produce a genuine Ser-



mon, as the practice of improvising to produce a great poem. The thoughts and aspirations which look direct to God, and the kindling of which among a fraternity of men constitutes social worship, are natives of solitude: the spectacle of an assembly is a hindrance to their occurrence; and though, where they have been devoutly set down beforehand, they may be re-assumed under such obstacle, they would not spontaneously rise, till the presence of a multitude was forgotten, and by a rare effort of abstraction the loneliness of the spirit was restored. The faculty of fluent speech is no doubt worthy of cultivation for various civic and moral ends: but if it were once adopted as the instrument of preaching, I am persuaded that the pulpit would exercise a far lower, though perhaps a wider, influence; would be a powerful agent of theological discussion, of social criticism, of moral and political censorship, but would lose its noblest element of religion. The devout genius of England would have occasion deeply to lament a change, which would reduce to the same class with the newspaper article a form of composition, enabling us to rank the names of Taylor, Barrow, Leighton, Butler, with the poets and philosophers of our country. At all events, he who finds room, under the conditions of the Sermon, to interest and engage his whole soul, would he guilty of affectation, were he to disown the occasion which wakes up his worthiest spirit, and which, however narrow when measured by the capacities of other men, is adequate to receive *his* best thoughts and aspirations. I am therefore well content to mingle with the crowd of Sermonizers.

It would be ungrateful, were I not to acknowledge, as one of the results of the former volume of this work, the delightful and unsought-for intercourse it has opened to me with persons, whom it is an honour to know, of various religious denominations. In *the divided state* of English society, a work which touches any

ings of religious affection common to several classes, performs not a seasonable, though very simple and natural, office. It applies an office which every day renders easier to earnest men. For there is undoubtedly an increasing body of persons in this country, who are rapidly escaping from the restraints of the old Christianity of the present day exists; and who are ready to lay hand and heart in order to give free scope to the essential truths and influences of our religion, in combination with the free exercise of thought, and just concessions to modern knowledge. To find one's-self in sympathy with such men is a heart-felt privilege, superiour to all personal distinction: it is to witness an escape from the worst prejudices of the present, and to behold the best auguries of the coming age.



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# DISCOURSES.

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## I.

### WHERE IS THY GOD?

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EZEKIEL VIII. 10—12.

SO I WENT IN AND SAW; AND BEHOLD EVERY FORM OF CREEPING THINGS AND ABOMINABLE BEASTS, AND ALL THE IDOLS OF THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL, POURTRAYED UPON THE WALLS ROUND ABOUT; AND THERE STOOD BEFORE THEM SEVENTY MEN OF THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL,—WITH EVERY MAN HIS CENSER IN HIS HAND; AND A THICK CLOUD OF INCENSE WENT UP. THEN SAID HE UNTO ME, SON OF MAN, HAST THOU SEEN WHAT THE ANCIENTS OF THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL DO IN THE DARK, EVERY MAN IN THE CHAMBERS OF HIS IMAGERY?

To a wise man there is no surer mark of decline in the spirit of a people, than the corruption of their language, and the loss of meaning from their highest and most sacred words. In the affairs of government, of morals, of divinity, we retain the phrases used by our forefathers in Shakspeare's time: but it is impossible to notice the dwindled thought which they frequently contain, without feeling that the currency struck for the commerce of giant souls has been clipped to serve the traffic of dwarfs. Observe, for example, the low-

ered meaning of the word RELIGION. If you ask, in these days, what a man's *religion* is, you are told something about the place he goes to on a Sunday, or the preacher he objects to least ; of his likings and dislikings, his habits and opinions, his conventional professions. But who, from all this, would draw any inference as to his *character* ? You know, *where to find him*, and *how he looks* ; but have obtained no insight *into what he is*. Yet, can it be doubted that if we knew his *religion* in the true and ancient sense, we should understand him perfectly ?—should see him, as God alone can see him now, stripped of the disguises that hide him even from himself, and with the vital pulse itself of thought and act laid bare to view ? The divine Omniscience, in relation to our nature, may be said to consist in nothing else than a discernment of our several religions. Not indeed that in his infinite Reason he knows anything about Churchmen, and Methodists, and Quakers ; or distinguishes the silent meeting from the organ's pomp ; or takes account of vestments black or white. These things only denote what a man will *call himself when he is asked* : they refer, even when most sincere, to nothing that has necessarily any deep seat within the character ; only to certain emblems, either in conception or in outward habit, adopted for the expression of affections the most various in direction and intensity. But whoever can so look into my heart as to tell *whether there is anything which I revere* ; and, if there be, *what thing* it is ; he may read me through and through, and there is no darkness wherein I may *hide myself*. This is the master-key to the whole moral

nature ; what does a man secretly admire and worship ? What haunts him with the deepest wonder ? What fills him with most earnest aspiration ? What should we overhear in the soliloquies of his unguarded mind ? This it is which, in the truth of things, constitutes his *religion* ;—this, which determines his precise place in the scale of spiritual ranks ;—this, which allies him to Hell or Heaven ;—this, which makes him the outcast or the accepted of the moral sentiments of the Holiest. Every man's *highest*, nameless though it be, is his "*living God*." while, oftener than we can tell, the being on whom he seems to call, whose history he learned in the catechism, of whom he hears at church,—with open ear perhaps, but with thick, deaf soul,—is his *dead God*. It is the former of these that gives me his genuine characteristic : that uppermost term in his mind discloses all the rest. Lift me the veil that hides the penetralia of his worship, let me see the genuflexions of his spirit, and catch the whiff of his incense, and look in the face the image at whose feet he is prostrate ; and thenceforth I know him well ; can tell where to find him in the world ; and divine the temper of his home. The classifications produced by this principle are not what you will meet with in any "*Sketch of all religions*." Their lines run across the divisions of historical sects, wholly regardless of their separations : but as they are drawn by the hand of nature and of conscience, rather than by that of pedants and of bigots, to study them is to gain insight into divine truth, instead of wandering through the catalogue of human errors. Let us endeavor then to distinguish between real



and pretended religion, by adverting to the several *chief aims* that manifestly preside over human life.

Of many a man you would never hesitate to say, that his chief aim was to obtain *ease*, or *wealth*, or *dignity*. These are the objects manifestly in front of him, and, like some huge magnetic mass, drawing his whole nature towards them. The fact is apparent, not altogether from the amount of time which he devotes to them ; for often the thing dearest and most sacred to the heart may fill the fewest moments, and, though providing the whole spirit, may scarcely touch the matter, of our days ; nor even from the topics of his talk ; for there are those who, in conversation, seek rather to learn what is most foreign to them, than to speak what is most native ; but from certain slight though expressive symptoms, hard to describe in detail, yet not easily missed in their combination. The engagements to which he takes with the heartiest relish, the sentiments that raise his quickest response, the occasions that visibly call him out and shake him free, the moments of his brightening eye, and genial laugh, and flowing voice, leave on us an irresistible impression of his sincerest tastes and deepest desires. And above all, does he reveal these, when we discover the *persons* who most occupy his thoughts ; in whom he sees what he would like to be or to appear, and whose lot or life he feels it would be an *ascent* to gain. Judged by signs infallible as these, how many are there, surrendered to a low Epicurean life !—who know no higher end than to be comfortable or renowned !—whose care is for *what they may have*, and not for what they might *be* !

If they achieve any real work, it is only that they may reach its end and take their ease. If they do a deed of public justice, it is as much due to the publicity as to the justice. If they are detected in a charity, it is with the smallest possible mercy of heart, and is performed as a slothful riddance of uneasiness, or a creditable compliance with convention. If they pray not to be led into temptation, it is only the temptation to imprudence and social mistake ; if to be delivered from evil, it is but the evil of trouble or derision. To make the largest use of men, rendering back the smallest amount of service, to reap the greatest crop from the present, and drop the scantiest seeds for the future, is their true problem of existence. They never rush on toil and struggle that bring no price ; or stretch their reason till it aches in search of truth ; or crucify their affections in redemption of human wrongs ; or spend their reputation and their strength in rousing the public conscience from its sleep. Their whole faculties are apprenticed to themselves. Unconscious of a heaven above them and around, they live and die on principles purely mercantile ; and the book of life must be a common ledger, if their names are written on its page.

It is needless at present to settle the comparative rank of these three seducing aims ; else we might decide, perhaps, that, as a primary object of pursuit, ease is *more* ignoble, and reputation *less*, than wealth, which excites the more prevailing desire. The great thing to be observed is common to them all. They do not carry a man *out of himself*, or show him anything higher. He is *the centre in which they all terminate*: he spins

upon his own axis in the dark, ineffectually shaping and rounding his particular world, but wheeling round no glorious orb, feeling no celestial light, flushed with no colors of morn and eve, and barren of seasonal foliage and fruit. What is his habitual day-dream ? What the conception that moves before him in secret vision, and strives for realization ? Is it the thought of the heroes and the saints of history ? or of friends at his right hand, whose nobler spirits shame his weakness ? Is it not simply the image of *himself easy, himself rich, himself grand and famous* ? This one corrupting picture is the substitute in him for the whole pantheon of great souls ; for sages, prophets, martyrs, and whatever of beauty and sanctity has ever dwelt in earth or heaven. His whole system of desires is mere *personal greed* : he stands upon his own flat, without an aspiration. Nothing has a divine right to him, but he has a human appetite for all things. He worships nothing ; he serves nothing : if God were away and heaven were not, it would make no difference to him ; he would never miss them : his life is Godless ; he is an Atheist.

This, in fact, is the strict and proper meaning of the word Atheism ; the absence from a man's mind of any object of worship ; so that he is left with nothing above him, and lives wholly to himself. Hence this term, though often applied unjustly to very different states of mind, is properly one of odium : for it is impossible to contemplate such a condition of character without strong aversion ; or to conceive of its production without a large operation of moral and voluntary causes. *We may observe too, that the effects of this irreligion*

are as disorganising in society, as they are debasing to the individual. It wholly dissolves the great tie which binds men together, and is alone capable of forming them into a fraternity,—the sentiment of mutual reverence. Do you say, that among the servants of Wealth or of Fame also this sentiment has place, because he who has little is found to admire him who has more, and to wait upon him with vast humility? He does no such thing. He admires *the lot*, but cares nothing for the man; and this combination of positive and negative feelings,—aspiration after another's state without any love for the person in it,—is not honour, but simply envy. As for the so-called *humility* of the poor menial in this career, in the presence of his worldly superior, the quality has no right to a moral, much less to a Christian name. It is mere *unmanliness* arising from the failure of self-respect as well as of mutual reverence: human attributes are wholly emptied out of the relation, and human possessions alone remain to look one another in the face; and the men, losing all higher significance, are left in each other's presence, as two degrees of comparison in the vocabulary of Mammon. Nay, in many a one, this seeming subserviency is even worse; it is an admiration of *himself as he is to be*, and no less full of pride than it is of meanness. To confound this servility with the lowly dignity of worship, is to mistake the slouch of pauperism touching the hat, with the uplifted look of Mary sitting at the feet. And what kind of community would that be, whose moral composition was from these two elements, *universal self-seeking*, and general dearth of mutual reve-

rence? Go to the heart of the matter, and every man would be a centre of repulsion, held to his particular sphere of human atoms by an external framework of precarious interests ; instead of taking his place in a system of natural attractions, which would endure though the world itself were to sink away.

Beyond this stage of character, which I have described by the word *Atheism*, the smallest step introduces us to *some* form of religion. There is no further condition of mind, that is not marked by the consciousness of *something* spiritually higher ; something that has divine right over us ; something therefore which, to say the least, stands for us in the place of God. Still, ere we reach the limit of pure and perfect religion, which is that of Christ, there is an ample range of error and imperfection, which may be designated by the general name of *Idolatry*. This offence against truth is far from being an obsolete historical affair, that is gone out with the Old Testament, and of no concern except to Missionaries now. It abounds (taking the strictest and most philosophic meaning of the term) in every Christian land, and every Christian sect ; though it certainly constitutes a partial apostasy from the true faith of Christendom. To make this plain, let me ask you to reflect, what is the real essence of Idolatry, and how we are to distinguish it from pure religion.

Some will affirm, that true worship addresses itself direct to the living God himself ; appearing before him face to face, and discerning him as he is in his own nature : while idolatry interposes, before the eye of the *body or the mind*, some image, which is not God, but *only represents him*.

It is, however, impossible to rest the distinction thus, upon the absence of symbol in one case, and its presence in the other; for it is equally found in both, and is wholly indispensable to religion itself. On these terms, we should all (not men alone, but angels too) be idolaters alike. For God, being infinite, can never be fully comprehended by our minds: whatever thought of him be there, his real nature must still transcend: there will yet be deep after deep beyond, within that light ineffable; and what we see, compared with what we do not see, will be as the rain-drop to the firmament. Our conception of him can never *correspond with the reality*; so as to be without omission, disproportion, or aberration; but can only *represent the reality*, and *stand for God* within our souls, till nobler thoughts arise and reveal themselves as his interpreters. And this is precisely what we mean by a symbolical idea. The devotee who prostrates himself before a black stone,—the Egyptian who in his prayers was haunted by the ideal form of the graceful ibis or the monstrous sphinx,—the Theist who bends beneath the starry porch that midnight opens to the temple of the universe,—the Christian who sees in heaven a spirit akin to that which divinely lived in Galilee, and with glorious pity died on Calvary;—all alike assume a representation of Him whose immeasurable nature they can neither compass nor escape. And the only question is, whether the conception they pourtray upon the wall of their ideal temple, is an abominable idol, or a true and sanctifying mediatorial thought.

Others, who admit the necessity of representative ideas

in Religion, will say that idolatry consists in making the symbol *visible*, while true Religion leaves it *mental and invisible*.

Yet it could hardly be deemed impossible for a *blind man to be an idolater* : superstition and sin are not to be escaped through mere physical privation. And if an image present to the mind's eye alone, suffices to constitute an idol, then nothing remains for true religion, but to think in mere abstractions ; to worship, not a thinking, ruling, loving, holy *Being*, but Thought, and Power, and Love, and Holiness themselves ; to adore, not a divine Architect of creation, but the bare Skill itself of the architecture ; to avoid all approach to *impersonation* of divine attributes, and to fly, as from a sin, before the uprising of a concrete and a living God. Yet, I need not say, this is an impossible and untenable state of mind : the aim at it is that which constitutes a lifeless Pantheism ; and the mere poetical contemplation of nature does not deepen into the adoring service of God, till we feel creation and life to be at the disposal of a present Mind, a personal and moral Will, with absolute love of good and perfect abhorrence of evil, with distinct and self-directing activity, to which the laws, the order, the beauty, the scale, the progression, the issues of all things, are devoutly referred. And wherever such a faith exists, there is a conception in the mind, as truly representative and as little restrained within the limits of abstract thought, as the notion we may entertain of a character in history whom we have never seen, or of an angel in heaven whom we cannot see. *There is no one even, through whose prayers and*

meditations transient lights of beauty and floating fringes of imagery will not be found to pass ; nor is it in mortal thought otherwise to realize the majesty, the purity, the constancy, the tenderness of God.

The genuine characteristic of all Idolatry, then, can only be found in this ; that the symbol it adopts in worship is a *false and needlessly partial* representation of the divine nature ; while pure Religion holds to one which is *true and perfect*, wanting of the reality, not in the quality of its spirit, but only in the scale of its dimensions. Our minds are so ill-proportioned, and through ignorance and evil violate so much the proper symmetry of a spiritual nature, that, left to their own wilful ways, they misrepresent to us the true essence of perfection ; and many an image does our adoring fancy grave, and then obey, which cannot innocently stand in the place of God, and supplants a worship of diviner right. Thus, there is the *Philosopher's* idol, shaped and set up by Intellect unsanctified of conscience. To this is attracted an exclusive reverence for Wisdom, Thought, and Skill : the votary has learned how little is all he knows, and stands with serene aspiration before the presence of Infinite Reason ; unconscious meanwhile of his children neglected at his feet, and the cries of humanity bleeding near him in the dust. There is the *Artist's* idol, portrayed upon the wall of nature with the pencil of beauty, and reflecting a flush of loveliness over heaven and earth : many a glorious soul has bowed down before this, and been inspired by it to do great and wondrous things ; yet how often betrayed at the same time into passionate license, and mean peev-



ishness ! There is the *Stoic's* idol, chiselled by austere conscience, from the granitic masses of spiritual strength, and worshipped as the image of divine Justice, Majesty and Holiness. This has won and held captive the noblest spirits that are not wholly Christian, and glorified them to a manliness approaching something divine ; yet wanting still the mellowing of pity, and the grace of sweet and glad affections. And there is the *Woman's* idol, with Madonna look, captivating to gentler minds ; embodying and awakening the reverence for Mercy and disinterested Love ; and, by omission, enfeebling the severe healthfulness of duty, and merging the struggling heroism of this life in the glorified saintship of another. All these are but delusive impersonations of separated attributes of God ; of his Intellect ; his creative Thought ; his Will ; his Affectionateness. They are mutilated representations of his nature ; idols of the worshipper's heart, the serving of which will rather confirm and exaggerate, than remedy, the defective proportions of his soul ; elevating him indeed above himself, but still leaving him below his powers. Nor is there any security against this devotion to idols of the mind, except that which Heaven itself hath furnished to all Christendom ; the reverential acceptance of Christ as the highest Image of the invisible God, the complete and finished representation of his moral perfections. Here, nothing is exuberant, nothing deficient ; but there prevails a harmony of spirit absolute and divine. In the Eternal Providence that rules us, reason can conceive, conscience can demand, affection can discern, nothing which has not its expression in the

author and perfecter of faith. In worshipping the combination of attributes, through which he has shown us the Father, there can be no fear that any duty will be forgotten, any taste corrupted, any aspiration laid asleep. Drawn upward by such an object, nothing in us can remain low and weak : the simplicity of the child, the strength of the man, the love of the woman, the thought of the sage, the courage of the martyr, the elevation of the saint, the purity of the angel, press and strive to unite and realize themselves within our souls. Standing before a God, of whose *Mind* the universe, of whose *Spirit* the Man of Nazareth is the accepted symbol, we must become, in proportion to the sincerity and depth of our devotion, transfigured with the divinest glory of reason and affection, that can rest upon a nature like ours ; and raised to a comprehension of that "love of Christ which passeth knowledge," our souls must not only attain a fairer proportion, but expand also to nobler dimensions, as they become "filled with the fulness of God."

Thus, "to as many as receive him," does Christ "give power to become sons of God." By such worship is the nature of the individual disciple glorified. And what is true of a single mind, is no less true of communities of men. They also have their atheisms, and their several idolatries ; from which too they can be recalled and preserved only in proportion as they find their principle of combination, and their mode of action, in the deep love and reverence of the perfectness of Christ. No age, since the reformation, has been so marked by *idol-worship* as our own ;—so prolific of fa-

avourite and one-sided schemes of social improvement, founded on the sense of some solitary want of human nature, but barren of good from neglect of all the rest. Our Christianity is no longer *Catholic*, rich in provisions for the whole faculties and being of man. With the expansion and complication of our life, religion has lost its comprehensive grasp of all the elements of our well-being, and permitted them to escape and break up in mischievous analysis, and consign themselves to separate trusts. In answer to the earnest cry of society, 'What shall we do to be saved from all our miseries and sins?' there are countless fragmentary answers, in place of the deep, full harmony of response, from the soul of Christian inspiration. 'Give us more bread,' says one; 'more money,' says a second; 'more churches, more belief, more priests,' say others in their turn; and not the least intelligent and worthy will exclaim for the diminution of distilleries, or the multiplication of schools. For my own part, I believe that human nature is not like a house, which you may build up piecemeal,—first the stone, then the wood,—to its true finish and proportion; but, rather, like the lily or the tree, which grow in all parts,—the stem, the root, the leaf,—*at once*, and keep a constant symmetry. It must be nourished and unfolded simultaneously in all its dimensions, or its enlargement is mere distortion and disease. There is truth with those who idolize the *physical* means of augmenting the comforts of the people; but it is only the truth which lurked in the foul Egyptian adoration of the prolific powers of nature. There is *truth* with those who trust in the ameliorating energy of

knowledge and of art ; but it is the truth which filled Athens with the worship of the wise Minerva, and which left it still, in the estimate of the Christian apostle, "in all things too superstitious." There is truth with those who say we want more faith and devout obedience ; but if the temple of our life be denied the light of Thought, then, though every man stands, saint-like, with his censer in his hand, he will just repeat "what the elders of Israel did in the dark,"—send up his foolish cloud of incense before "creeping things and abominable beasts." Society, to avoid corruption in any of these agencies, must concurrently avail itself of all. And there is no power, which embraces them all, and assigns to each its proper rank, except that divine religion which makes Christ the model and the end of life. Trusting to inferior forces, we shall find that each is blind to all that lies above it, and provides for the world only up to its own level. But Christian faith, in aiming at once at the highest elements of good, necessarily includes the lowest ; it contains within itself an epitome of all the parts of human perfection ; and in the heart of a nation, as of a man, it is the grand source of moral salubrity and inextinguishable hope. In proportion as they have receded from this, have States and generations slipped into thralldom to partial theories and unworthy aims ; and in the devouring haste of gain, or the mad passion for war, or the blindness of mutual distrust, have brought down the weighty penalties by which Heaven recalls society from its unfaithfulness. But while the image of Christ remains as the central and holy light of every home, the moral delusions that waste a peo-

ple's strength can find no place of entrance ; and moderate desires in private life, with a paramount sense of justice in the State ;—guardianship over the weak, with vigilance against the strong ; care of neglected childhood, reverence for lingering age, and a share of willing honour for all men ; with a hearty homage to all truth as the reflected Light, and Duty as the express Law of God, must characterise and consolidate that happy people from whom no cloud of idol incense yet hides the beauty of the Son of Man.

THE SORROW WITH DOWNWARD LOOK.

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MARK X. 20—22.

AND HE ANSWERED AND SAID UNTO HIM, 'MASTER, ALL THESE THINGS HAVE I OBSERVED FROM MY YOUTH.' THEN JESUS, BEHOLDING HIM, LOVED HIM, AND SAID UNTO HIM, 'ONE THING THOU LACKEST; GO THY WAY, SELL WHATSOEVER THOU HAST, AND GIVE TO THE POOR, AND THOU SHALT HAVE TREASURE IN HEAVEN; AND COME, TAKE UP THE CROSS AND FOLLOW ME.' AND HE WAS SAD AT THAT SAYING, AND WENT AWAY GRIEVED; FOR HE HAD GREAT POSSESSIONS.

WHAT made this young man retire in sorrow from before the face of Christ? That the demand made upon him was quite irrational, all political economists would confidentially assure him. That he had every reason to be satisfied with a life so pure and orderly, would be declared by every worthy neighbor and all judicious divines. And if he carried home with him any traces of the sadness with which he turned from the eye of Jesus, no doubt he was cheered up, as far as might be, by the loving rebukes of wife or friends, chiding his misgivings, and laughing his thoughtfulness away. If a man who keeps all the commandments may not be happy, who may? With a memory clear of reproach from the youth up, whence can he have drawn the cloud to shade so innocent a soul? All the sources

of inward care and conflict seem to be excluded here ; and we appear to have the perfect representative of a life at peace. To say nothing of the ruler's property, which was ample for external comfort, he had fulfilled the one grand requisite of moral contentment and repose ; he had established a harmony between his perceptions and his actions, and framed his modes of conduct by his sentiments of right. Now there is, apparently, no other condition of inward peace than this. All men feel the *worth* of the spiritual affections that solicit them, and revere the obligation of the better to exclude the worse. All men feel also the comparative *strength* of these same affections, and find in some a power which others ineffectually dispute. Wherever the order of strength agrees exactly with the order of worth ; wherever the desire known to be the highest, is also the most intense, and no brute passion usurps the throne instead of serving as the footstool ; wherever the habits are shaped and proportioned by the scale of excellence and beauty within ; there, strife and sorrow cannot be ; there, is the glad consent between hand and heart, the concord between our worship and our will, which charms away the approach of care. This harmony may be obtained in either of two ways ; by tuning up the life to the key-note of thought ; or by letting down the thought to the pitch of the actual life. He who will persistently follow his highest impulses and convictions, who will trust only these amid noisier claims, and constrain himself to go with them alike in their faintness and their might, shall not find his *struggle everlasting* : his wrestlings shall become fewer and

less terrible: the hand of God, so dim to him and doubtful at the first, shall in the end be the only thing that is clear and sure: his best shall be his strongest too. But this, which is a holy peace, is not the only rest open to the contradictions of our nature. There is also an escape from discord by an inverse and descending path. And if a man will steadily follow his strongest impulses, without regard to their vileness or their worth, will give no heed to any whispering compunction, will do only and always what he likes; from him too the jarring and conflict of nature shall pass away: God's spirit will not always strive with him, to turn his wilful steps: the angels that beset his path with entreaty, with protest, with defiance, will thin off till they are seen no more: he will enjoy a cheerful and comfortable exemption from anything divine; and, by withdrawal of all else, his strongest affections will become his best. So far as mere ease and pleasure are concerned, there is not perhaps much to choose between these two opposite modes of self-reconciliation. If a man resolves to disown the upper region of his nature, he may find entertainment, if that be all, in the lower: and care may be made to fly before the gas-lamps and merriment of the vault, as well as beneath the starlight of the observatory and the silence of the skies. The difference is not sentient but moral; between the harmonies of the world above, and the enchantments of Circe's isle; the one, a music straying from the gate of heaven, and waking the soul to share the vigils of immortals; the other, composing it to sleep upon the verge of hell. It was, however, in the nobler



way that the young man in the text had established his right to an unanxious life, and attracted the love of Christ: he had conformed his habits to his moral sense, not sunk his moral sense to the level of his habits. What then had happened to disturb the rest arising from their concord?

The truth is, this young ruler had *had* all the content that noble minds can derive from the order of a well-regulated life. He had come to the end of all such satisfactions, and found them fairly spent. They had become to him mere negative conditions of repose, without which indeed he would sink into self-contempt; but with which he rose into no self-reverence, and scarce escaped the haunting of a perpetual penitence. He felt that if this were all,—this, which was but the native path and beaten track of his soul,—the field of duty was no such glorious thing; and some diviner terms might have been asked, ere this flat earth should win eternal life. A store of unexhausted power, a pressure towards loftier aspiration, led him to fix an eager eye on Christ, and be ready for intenser work; and to be referred only to the old commands, and sent back to the familiar task, spread the dull shade over his heart again. He had reached the stage of character, which all men, as they are more faithful, the sooner reach, when the conscience breaks out beyond the life, and demands a sphere of enterprise larger than the home domain with all its settled ways. There is, there can be, no list of actions, no scheme of habits, that will permanently represent your duty, and stand as a *perpetual diagram* of right. Only while it is yet unreal-

ized, while it rises ideally above you, and reproaches your slurred and broken lines of order, is it truly the emblem of your obligations ; the moment you overtake it, and fall into coincidence with it, its function is gone, and it guides and teaches you no more ; it becomes simply what *you are*, which is always parted by an interval from what you *ought to be*. Moral excellence is a state of the affections, and must be measured by their purity and depth ; and in doing merely what is habitual the affections cannot keep awake : they live upon fresh thoughts and demand ever new toils : their eye is intent upon the future, drawn thither by a holy light ; and if once it retires upon the present, it droops into a fatal sleep. Obedience to a perfect God can be nothing less than a *service* constantly rendered by the will ; a voluntary effort, given largely and ungrudgingly in proportion to the gratefulness and magnanimity of the soul, and not therefore stinted in the angel, while it is lavished in the man. But from all that is customary the living forces of the will retire ; achieving ease, it loses sanctity ; it is a *slain victim*, acceptable to-day, unclean to-morrow ; for God will have at his altar the very breath and blood of life, and not alone its shape and shell. And so it is, that there is something truly infinite in duty ; it is a *région* that can never be inclosed ; we pitch our tent upon its boundary field, and as we survey it, we detect an ampler realm beyond. As the body could, by no far travelling, find a station where the arm might not yet be stretched forth ; so the soul can be borne by no progress to a point where the freewill shall not take another step. Hence it is evi-

dent that, in the mind of all responsible beings, there must be a perpetual alternation between two opposite states, of rest and unrest, succeeding and reproducing each other. While the moral conceptions are in clear advance of the actions, there is a secret shame which forbids repose : a sense of sorrowful aspiration impels the will to earnest effort, and sends it panting after the divine form that invites it on. At length Faith and Resolution overtake the image ; the interval is conquered, and that which was a vision in the past is a reality of the present : the outer and the inner life concur ; and for awhile the healthy joy of a good conscience touches the features with its light. But, in this absence of moral confusion, and under the shelter of a sacred peace, the energies of a pure mind, released from severer action, push forward to the seizure of higher thoughts. The conscience, wounded and bleeding no more, and cherished by the healthful air of God's approval, is sure to open into nobler dimensions. In truth, it is the chief good of a well-ordered structure of habits, that it protects the living soul within, frees it from mean dangers, and gives it leave to grow. And so the sentiments of duty burst from their confinement, and leave the life again behind ; restoring the spirit to its strife, till the intolerable chasm be traversed as before. This *systole* and *diastole* of the moral nature is as truly needful to its vital action, as the pulsations of the heart to our physical existence. Only, their *period* is indefinitely various, from a moment to a life. *Some men* you may find, whose habits and whose conscience settle down in fixed partnership for this world,

and are never seen diverging ; not, alas ! from the agility of their habits, but from the sluggishness of their conscience. Their moral perceptions are absolutely stationary, or show them even less of heaven in their manhood than in their youth. Doing what they think right, and thinking nothing right but what they do, they approve themselves and look up to nothing. They are not, however, exempt from the great law of alternation ; only, its oscillation is dull and slow ; and its sweep of rest having occupied this life, its sorrowful return must begin another. In nobler men, the period of the soul is quicker : for awhile, they fulfil their moral aims, and after conquest enjoy the victory ; they pitch their tent upon the field, and, not without a glad thanksgiving, accept a brief repose. But high hearts are never long without hearing some new call, some distant clarion of God, even in their dreams : and soon they are observed to break up the camp of ease, and start on some fresh march of faithful service. And to such productive wills the era of rest, like the Creator's Sabbath, is but as a sixth—and that all filled with hallowed hours,—to the working days whose morning and evening enclose and reclaim some realm of beauty out of chaos. And finally, looking higher still, we find those who never wait till their moral work accumulates, and who reward resolution with no rest ; with whom therefore the alternation is instantaneous and constant ; who do the good only to see the better, and see the better only to achieve it ; who are too meek for transport, too faithful for remorse, too earnest for repose ; whose worship is action, and whose action ceaseless aspiration.

This last case, in which the law of alternation has its period reduced to a vanishing interval, fulfils our conception of an angel-mind. To higher natures it belongs to have nothing discordant, nothing intermittent; their thought ever advancing, their will never lingering, the disturbance between them is annihilated as fast as it is created; and with activity more glorious than ours, they substitute for our human periodicity a diviner constancy. If, as the prophet's dream proclaims, there is "no night" in the better world, the scene, unshaded by the darkness, unkindled by the blaze of day, is the fitting residence for beings exempt from the ebb and flow of energy and repose; who have no morning and evening sacrifice, but from whose fragrant and fervid mind the cloud of incense eternally ascends; whose affections send forth no interrupted anthem, but in ever-living harmony *continually* cry, "Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty, who art, and wast, and art to come." This characteristic in our conception of more heavenly natures presents them to us under an aspect of intent, yet passionless, serenity. We attribute to them a perfect moral beauty,—a god-like symmetry of goodness,—which fills us with reverence, trust, affection, which draws from us the sigh of hope, and refreshes us in the weariness of our harsher life. But we ascribe to them no *merit*; we desire for them no *reward*; no plaudits burst from our hearts as we meditate their high career. As soon almost should we think of applauding the perfectness of God. A spirit that undergoes no struggle is out of the sphere of *recompense*; being either below the point of noble

strife, so as not to *deserve* reward ; or above, so as not to *need* it. The perfect proportion between power and perception which we recognize in diviner natures excludes all idea of *resistance* : there is no hesitation for volition to encounter ; whatever is felt to be best is also loved as dearest, and simply pursued without a rival in the thoughts. This entire coalescence of the order of goodness and the order of desire, this instant and spontaneous adaptation of the Will to the Conscience through every stage of moral progression, distinguishes our notion of *saintly* excellence, and furnishes our clearest image of a higher world.

The conditions of this world, however, are of a lower and less glorious kind. We must rise by successive stages, not by perennial flight. We have always something to overtake : and there is a distance but too appreciable, between what we are and what we ought to be,—between what we wish and what we reverence. This distance can be recovered only by successive paroxysms of effort, prolonged into patient perseverance. We cannot hope to be released from this demand upon our half-reluctant powers, and must hold ourselves ready, with resolute denial, now to lash and now to cheer them on. When we have fairly won a point, and brought up our habit to our conscience, the penitential interval, destroyed for the moment, instantly begins to grow again. For, while action, breathless with successful toil, sits down to rest, affection, which has long been there, is moving on. While our moral love is ever in the future, our will becomes entangled in the past ; detained by clinging habits and lulled by old content-

ments, it sleeps upon its triumphs till it is surprised by sudden foes. Every new perception of good, every dawning upon us of higher obligations, finds our active forces pledged and pre-engaged to some poorer work, from which we have to tear ourselves away. This it is that makes all human faithfulness not holy but strenuous, and constitutes the difference between the saint and the hero. In proportion to the resistance which is felt, and the effort set up against it, in proportion to the *strength* of natural desire which is put aside for its inferior worth,—is the virtue admitted to be noble and heroic: we praise it with a glad and glorious heart: we celebrate it as a triumph; and cry—what we could never say to angel or to God,—“Well done!” The sentiment seems to imply that the achievement is something more than could be expected. But if such crisis of conflict comes to ourselves, we know well that it is not in our option to shrink from it with innocence; that to discern a moral good as possible, is to come under the obligation to make it real. And if the effort is faithlessly declined, there inevitably creeps upon us, first, an ignominious sorrow; and next, a sadder and more fatal *loss* of the sorrow, and of all true worship of the heart.

This first grief it was that took the young ruler with mournful steps away: and an anticipation of the second that led Jesus to look on him with a boundless pity. Christ saw in him the soul, which, if it could but be the hero, would become the angel; if not, would sink, with many an ineffectual horror, into infinite depths. The man's early life had enabled him to see, what was hid-

den from consciences more confused, the divine perfectness of Christ. The chief value of his good ways, of his steady heed to the commandments, was that it just brought him favorably to this very moment, and set him with open-eyed perception before Messiah's face. By the vision of so holy a spirit, as it passed near him, he had caught the feeling of a higher life than that of well-ordered habit; had been irresistibly drawn to put the question so fatal to his peace; had heard his own consciousness repeated, and sent like a bell-stroke to his heart, in the deep words, "Yet lackest thou one thing;" yet withal he had not strength to follow, and went away with the cloud settled on his spirit. And once having seen and refused a better life, he finds that the merely good life, adequate before, has lost all its sacredness. Henceforth it is without a charm, and empty of every inspiration; and lies before him with dead and leaden aspect, tinged with no glory, and promising no heaven. And every mind of imperfect earnestness has to bear a like burden of sorrow;—not the Christ-like sorrow of infinite aspiration, chasing a good it cannot fully overtake; for that is a sorrow with upward look, piercing the heavens with a gaze of prayer:—but the shameful sorrow of penitent infirmity, retreating from the good it has refused to follow; a sorrow with ever downcast look, to which the heavens are hid, and the earth bereft of beauty and soiled with common dust.

All men are liable to this grievous experience; for all are visited by gleams of something fairer and more faithful than their own lives. But those are most fear-



fully exposed to it, who have the dangerous yet glorious gift of high powers and opportunities. Had Christ never crossed the path of that youth of great possessions, his imagination would have remained without its divinest picture, and his conscience without its deadliest reproach. Or had he been rich only, and not thoughtful too, he might have passed that consecrated figure by, and felt no shadow fall on his content. The privilege and the sadness came together. And those who are haunted by no visions of higher good, who see only what the sun or moon may shine upon ;—on whom no lifted veil lets in the splendours so kindling to the nobler Reason, so fatal to the feeble Will,—escape the sighs of bitterest regret. Whoso is placed of God upon the loftiest heights, is on the verge of the most enshadowed chasms. The revelations of thought and conscience are awful privileges, vainly coveted by profane ambition, and even to the devout and wise, safe only when received with pure self-renunciation. The richest lights that fall upon the soul lie next to the deepest tones of shade. Messiah's first gaze of divine affection on the half-earnest youth would doubtless send through his heart a hopeful joy : but afterwards, when he had lapsed into the old and common self, that very glance would become a terrible remembrance. And so is it with us all : every light of moral beauty, permitted to entrance, but not allowed to guide us, becomes, like the after-image of the sun when idly stared at, a dark speck upon the soul, which follows us at all our work, adheres to every object, approaches and recedes in dreams, and is neither evaded by movement, nor wash-

ed out by tears. If the fairest gifts are not to be turned into haunting griefs, it can only be by following in the ways of duty and denial along which they manifestly lead ; and, while yet they look upon us, like the eye of Christ, with a sacred love, resolving on that quiet self-surrender, which shall meet their solemn claim, and prevent our ever hearing again the words, " Yet lackest thou one thing."

### III.

#### THE SHADOW OF DEATH.

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PHILIPPIANS I. 21.

FOR TO ME, TO LIVE IS CHRIST, AND TO DIE IS GAIN.

It is natural to conclude that one who could feel death to be a gain, must have had few treasures in life to lose. The sentiment evidently belongs to a heart that had either outlived the objects of affection and favorite pursuit ; or else had loved little, while capable of loving much, and was unattached to the scene of human existence except at its points of duty. It is perfectly conceivable that a mind disengaged from external realities, keeping together and entire its own feelings, interested most profoundly in the abstractions of its own faith and hope, may welcome the transition to another form of being, in which it will retain its individuality complete, and be surrounded by new objects tempting it at length to open forth. He that has no deep root in this world, may suffer transplantation without pain. And thus it was with Paul. His ardent and generous soul had fastened itself on no one living object, but on an abstraction, a thing of his own mind, *the truth*. For half his life a wanderer over the earth, no place looked up at him with a domestic eye. Call-

ed as he was into ever new society, and passing rapidly through all orders of men ; accustomed to study in quick succession the feelings of slave and philosopher, of Jew, of Asiatic, of Athenian and Roman, his personal sympathies were disciplined to promptitude rather than to profundity. He rested nowhere long enough to feel his nature silently yet irrevocably depositing itself there ; but was at all times ready to gather up his feelings and pass on. Christ and God, the objects of his most earnest love, were viewless and ideal here, and would become realities only when death had transferred him to the future. It is true that a noble attachment bound him to his disciples ; but he loved them, less in their individual persons and for their own sakes, than as depositaries of the truth,—as links of a living chain of minds by which that truth would complete its circuit, and find a passage for its renovating power. Nor was there anything in his outward condition to which his desires could eagerly cling. The world, as a place of shelter, had been spoiled for him, by the Gospel : his pure tastes were revolted, his sympathies stung, at every turn : at Jerusalem, the impending fate of friends and country brooded on his spirit like a cloud : in Rome, the springs of social enjoyment were poisoned by the penetrating taint of a voluptuous polytheism ; at every table was the altar, on every tongue the light oath, of Idolatry. In every aspect society presented a scene, not for rest, but for toil : not to be enjoyed, but to be reformed : it offered no place where the Christian might innocently retreat within the sanctity of a home ; but summoned him forth, in the spirit of an

earnest and almost impatient benevolence, to purchase, by his own good fight of persuasion and of faith, a fuller purity and peace for coming times. In this noble conflict, life afforded to Paul the satisfactions of moral victory ; but death offered the persecuted apostle the only prospect of personal release ; from the prison it would transfer him to the skies ; and the fetters would fall from his hand in the freedom of immortality.

That Paul, thus insulated from earthly attachments, should feel a deeper interest in the future than in the present, is perfectly natural. But when Christians take up this feeling as essential to every disciple ; when they proclaim it a solemn duty to postpone every human feeling to the attractions of the eternal state ;—when they say, ‘it is not enough to take the promises to your heart as true comfort in your sorrow, but even in glad scenes of life, in youth, amid the ties of nature, in the very jubilee of the affections, you must yearn towards Heaven more than to the world, and to feel that to go is far better than to stay ;’—they are guilty of an insincere and mischievous parody on the sentiments of the Apostle. If we are to believe the rhapsodies of a prevalent fanaticism, no one has any vital religion, who does not think the world a waste, and life a burden, and all human affections snares of sin : whose impressions of God, and emotions towards Christ, do not far transcend in their intensity the love of kindred and of men ; and who do not, in all earnest moments of reflection, sigh for the hour which shall rescue them from their mortality. If a shade creeps upon the countenance at the

consciousness that youth departs, and that the foot has already entered the declining path ; if we cannot think of the wreck of vigour without regret, or look into a grave without a sigh ; if we manifest in any way that the mystery of mortality presses upon our hearts to sadden them ;—the only comfort that is offered us is, that we can have no real Christianity within us ; and, since we shrink from the thought of death so much, and yearn for Heaven so little, we must expect the retribution that never ends. Even those who hold a creed more merciful than this, regard such feelings with grave disapprobation, and suppose them to have their root in distrust of Providence, and doubts of Immortality. Yet the human heart quietly vindicates its own rights, and still weeps for death : the last hour is still felt to be a trial, not a joy,—a fitting time for resignation and meek trust, not for transport ; and, *to bear it well*, is held sufficient proof of a good and faithful hope. In spite of the imagined eagerness to depart and be with Christ, even the elect preserve their mortal life with no less care than the unbeliever ; and religious suicides, in impatience for an assured salvation, are crimes unheard of yet : nor is the funeral converted yet from a scene of grief into an ovation. It is obvious then that in this assumption of the Apostolic sentiment there is a latent insincerity,—an unconscious self-delusion,—as indeed there always is, where states of feeling rarely attainable are insisted on as essential duties. Unhappily, this hollow and inflated religion is far from being a harmless self-deception. Sarcastic sagacity sees its emptiness and scoffs. Minds affectionate and refined are revolted.

by a faith, calling for the excision of human affections which are an integrant portion of their life, and scowling on that lofty melancholy which has been often declared inseparable from superior natures. And thus the profession of religion, in its more earnest form, is apt to be found in association with the cold heart that, caring little for any thing here, gains an easy credit for sublimer aspirations; that reviles a scene of existence to whose beauty it is insensible, and plumes itself on freedom from human attachments, which it is not noble enough to feel; that has no better way of clothing the Heaven above with glory, than by making the earth below look hideous. In order to present some counteraction of conceptions so injurious, it may be useful to define the actual place which the immortal hope should occupy in our regards.

The true and natural state of mind is found, I apprehend, when the future of our faith is less loved than happy and virtuous existence on earth, but more loved than life here upon unfaithful or forbidden terms;—when, leaving unimpaired our content with permitted happiness, it brings the needful solace to affliction. It matters not that the realities of that higher world will doubtless transcend our happiest life, and the successive stages of our being be ever progressive in excellence. The reality can affect us only through our ideas of it; and these ideas present us with so faint an image of the truth, that its vividness must be surpassed by the warmer and nearer light of our actual and happy experience.

The future cannot reasonably be expected to com-

pete with the present in our desires, because our conceptions of it are necessarily nothing more than a selection from the present. The scenery of our immortal hope is constructed from the scattered elements of our mortal life. We borrow from memory its peaceful retrospect, from conscience its emotions of satisfied duty, from reason its delighted perceptions of truth, from affection and faith the repose of human sympathy, and the glow of diviner aspiration : and, combining all into one full thought glorified by the element of eternity, we see before us the Future of our hopes. Whatever other resources the great reality may contain, whatever impenetrable mysteries lie within the ample folds of its duration, must be inoperative on us, because not present to our minds. We look therefore at earth as comprising *all* the good which we have ever experienced : we look at heaven as repeating *some*. And though *in words* we may be assured of the superior intensity of the latter, *in thought* we can but dwell on it as it has been felt ;—he who has felt profoundly, anticipating vividly ;—he whose emotions are obtuse, looking on nothing but a blank. Nor does the conception of immense duration practically impart much brilliancy to the impressions of faith : for, time is nothing to us, except as it is replete with events, compounded of successive points of consciousness ; and we have no adequate stock of conceptions of the future wherewith to fill so mighty an expectancy, and people with various interest the vacancy of infinite ages. The actual effect of the Eternal hope is derived from the imagination of single passages of experience,—from the instantaneous glance of some



moment of blessedness or awe,—the smiting of a reproachful thought, the solution of a sad perplexity,—the vision of a recovered friend. It is not in ordinary human nature to prefer the fragmentary happiness of heaven, as alone it can appear before our thoughts, to the complete and well known satisfactions of this life in its peaceful attitudes.

Again, the future is to us an abstraction, a phantom, a floating vision, which cannot reasonably be expected to rival in interest the positive recollections of the actual scene in which we are placed. Sensible impressions, ideas of visible and audible objects, would seem indispensable to the existence of distinct and vivid conception: and when they depart, and we are called to think of events without any scenery; of emotions without utterance; of love without a hand to grasp; of knowledge without the converse with men and books, without the real study of light and air and water, and the solid rocks, and the living things of the forest and the ocean; of moral growth without a known theatre of moral action;—the vision is apt to flit away in impalpable and spectral forms. It is not that we derive our chief enjoyment from the senses: but material impressions are needful as the centres, the fixed points, round which feelings and recollections and imaginations cluster, and without which they are speedily dissipated. We love them, not on their own account, but as the shelter and the shrine of sentiments ineffably dear. The memories of childhood,—how do they rush upon the heart when we revisit the very scenes in which they had their birth! One tone of a bell whose summons

we were accustomed to obey,—the sight of a field where we met the companions of some favorite sport,—the re-entrance beneath a roof under which we gathered with brothers and sisters around the Christmas fire,—how do they do blessed violence to time, and snatch us into the past ! How do they make the atmosphere of our thoughts ring with the merry shout of playmates, or paint on the very space before us the smile of some dear absent face, or whisper the meek counsel of some departed voice ! So dependent are we on such outward things, that even slight changes in the parts of such a scene disturb us ; and the disappearance of a building or a tree seems to bereave us of a thousand sympathies. Long habit endears even the most homely familiarities of our existence, and we cannot part with them without a pang ; we hang our thoughts upon the surfaces of all things round us,—on the walls of our home, the hours of the day, the faces of neighbours, the quiet of country, or the stir of town. And then, too, the domesticities of life ! Oh God ! they would be too much for our religion, were they not themselves in pure hearts a very form of that religion. If we could all go together, there would be nothing in it : but that separate dropping off—that departing one by one,—that drift from our anchorage alone—that thrust into a widowed heaven,—who can deny it to be a lonesome thing ? It is mere ignorance of the human mind to expect the love of God to overpower all this. Why, the more we have thought of him,—the more we have venerated and trusted him, so much the more closely has he too become associated with the familiar

scenery and companions of our life ; they have grown into his image and interpreters ; they have established themselves as the shrine of our piety, the sanctuary of his spirit, the expression of his love : and when we are torn from *them*, we seem to retire to a distance from *his* shelter. If Christ felt the cup to be bitter, and turned for a moment from the draught ; if he trembled that he should see no more the towers of Jerusalem, though to see them had drawn forth prophetic tears ; if he sorrowed in spirit to bid adieu to the family of Bethany, though the tie was that of friendship and not of home ; if he hid his head at parting in the bosom of the beloved disciple, though to Mary the mother that disciple was needful still ; if he had rather that the immortal spirits of the elder time should come to commune with him in the familiar groves of Tabor, than himself be borne to them he knew not whither ; if the Mount of Olives, his favorite retreat of midnight prayer, and the shore of the Galilean Lake, witness to the musings and enterprises of his opening ministry, and the verdant slopes of Nazareth, sacred with the memories of early years, seemed to gaze in upon his melted soul with a beseeching look that he would not go ;— may not we, without the reproach of impiety or the suspicion of unacknowledged doubts, feel that to depart is no light struggle, and cast a lingering glance at the friendly scene we quit ? It is not the animal conflict of death, the corporeal pain of an organization ceasing to be ; to be much concerned about that were an unmanly fear. It is not any torturing apprehension about the mysterious future, any dread of the great secret, any

questioning whether all will be well there: for a good man to be disturbed with such feelings, shows a morbid timidity of faith, a feeble distrust of the benignity of Providence, with which an affectionate piety will have no sympathy. It is simply and solely the adieu to things loved and left, the exchange of the familiar for the new, from which our hearts may be justified if they recoil. Doubtless, the time will come, when successive strokes of bereavement have fallen upon our homes, for that recoil to cease. When in the sanctuary of the affections the lights are almost extinguished, and those that remain only enable us to read the inscriptions on the multitude of surrounding tombs; when, in fact, the solitude would be, not to depart, but to remain—we may well and naturally feel that it is time to go, and our prayer may be to be speedily withdrawn to the place of rest. For now, whatever may be the indistinctness of the future, the groups of friendship are there; they make the best part of its scenery; and wherever they are is a shelter and a home. However strange to us the colony may be in which they dwell, if, as we cross the deeps of death, their visionary forms shall crowd the shore, and people the hills of that unvisited abode, it will be to us “a better country, even a heavenly.”

There is then a glow in this world more genial and less faint than the orb of everlasting hope; and yet a darkness too, most thankful for its mild and holy beams. Pale at our mid-day, it attains its glory at our noon of night; and if it does not light us at our work, lifts us when we watch and pray. The proper entrance for

faith and hope lies between the ripeness of blessing and the deepening of sadness ; between the crown and the cross of life. Do you think that so modest a place for so great an expectation is injurious to the dignity of religion ? Perhaps it is in the better harmony with its humility : at least it seems not unsuitable to a mind which is so grateful for the present, as to shrink from pressing anxious claims upon the future : which loves so well the *given* world of God, as not often to remind him of the *promised* one. Were this the only eclipse which the immortal prospect is liable to suffer, there would be little need to lament the languor of its light. That causes less excusable also intercept its influence, is not indeed to be denied : but where are we to seek the remedy ? Shall we endeavor to loosen the affections from this life, and forbid all heart-allegiance towards a scene to which we are tempted so strongly to cling ? Alas ! we shall not love Heaven more for loving earth less : this would be a mere destruction of one set of sympathies, in no way tending to the creation of another. The love of God may even find its root in the love of kindred ; and admiration of his works and ways is the germ of adoration of himself. If it is from the blessings of the present that we construct our conception of the future ; to enfeeble our sense of these blessings, is to take away the very materials of faith. No ; the needful thing is not that we abate, but that we consecrate, the interests and affections of our life ; entertain them with a thoughtful heart ; serve them with the will of duty ; and revere them as the benediction of our God. The same spirit which takes the veil

of Deity from the present will drive away the clouds that overhang the future ; and he that makes his moments devout, shall not feel his eternity to be cheerless. And as it is the fascinations of affectionate memory that hold us back, they may be not a little counteracted by the creations of sacred hope. We shall be less servilely detained among things seen, when we are less indolent in our conceptions of things unseen ; when we freely cast into them every blessed remembrance, every high pursuit, every unanswered aspiration, every image pure and dear ; and invest them with the forms of a divine and holy beauty. If the particular good which we imagine should not arrive, it can only be because God will present us with far better. Without this free license for the creations of faith, I see not how, while we are mortals yet, Immortality can exercise its due attraction upon our minds. To *die*, can never, without an enthusiasm which does violence to reason, and little credit to the heart, be an act of *transport* : so low as an act of *submission* it need not sink ; for that would imply a belief that the change from the present to the future is for evil. It is most fitly met in the spirit of *trust* ;—an unbroken belief that it is for the better, but a feeling of reluctance, which we distrust and check, as though it were for the worse ; a consciousness that, if we chose for ourselves, we should remain where we are, yet not a doubt of the greater wisdom and goodness of God's choice, that we should go. If this spirit of humble faith be not high-wrought enough, may God forgive the loving hearts that can attain no better !

## IV.

### GREAT HOPES FOR GREAT SOULS.

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#### 1 CORINTHIANS XV. 48.

AS IS THE HEAVENLY, SUCH ARE THEY ALSO THAT ARE HEAVENLY.

THE contempt with which it is the frequent practice of divines to treat the grounds of natural religion, betrays an ignorance both of the true office of revelation, and of the true wants of the human heart. It cannot be justified except on the supposition that there is some contradiction between the teachings of creation and those of Christ, with some decided preponderance of proof in favour of the latter. Even if the Gospel furnished a series of perfectly new truths of which nature had been profoundly silent, it would be neither reasonable nor safe to fix exclusive attention on these recent and historical acquisitions, and prohibit all reference to those elder oracles of God, by which his Spirit, enshrined in the glories of his universe, taught the fathers of our race. And if it be the function of Christianity, not to administer truth entirely new, but to corroborate by fresh evidence, and invest with new beauty, and publish to the millions with a voice of power, a faith latent already in the hearts of many, and scattered through the speculations of the wise and noble few,—

to erect into realities the dreams which had visited a half-inspired philosophy, interpreting the life and lot of man ;—then there is a relation between the religion of nature and that of Christ,—a relation of original and supplement,—which renders the one essential to the apprehension of the other. Revelation, you say, has given us the clue by which to thread the labyrinth of creation, and extricate ourselves from its passages of mystery and gloom. Be it so ; still, *there*, in the scene thus cleared of its perplexity, must our worship be paid, and the manifestation of Deity be sought. If the use of revelation be to explain the perplexities of Providence and life, it would be a strange use to make of the explanation, were we to turn away from the thing explained. We hold the key of heaven in our hands ; what folly to be forever extolling and venerating it, whilst we prohibit all approach to the temple, whose gates it is destined to unlock !

The great doctrine of human immortality has received from Christianity its widest and noblest efficacy ; has been lifted for many a generation from a low point of probability to the confines of certainty ; and has found in the risen and ascended Jesus an answer to the difficulties which most embarrass the faith and hope of the human mind. But the influence which is most effectual in diffusing a truth in the first instance, is not always the best for creating the better and later faith of the reflecting heart : and when the historical illustration is exhausted of something of its power, it may be useful to the feelings and imagination to dwell on considerations, of feebler force, perhaps, but of nearer and

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deeper interest. Thus it is with the natural indications of human immortality. Nature and life, our sins and sorrows, our virtues and our peace, have on them the traces of a great futurity ; and to neglect these is to pay a dubious and even fatal honour to revelation. The Christian history is a matter long past ; the resurrection of our great Prophet is viewed by us at the remoter end of a series of centuries ; and the vibration with which it should thrill our affections is almost lost in traversing so vast a gulf. But if in the actual phenomena of human life and its distribution of good and ill,—if in the very constitution of our own minds, there are evidences of a cycle of existence beyond the present, we have here a voice, not of history, but of experience, bidding us look up ; a warning from the living present, not from the tomb of the past : and though it may be less clear in its announcements, yet may the gentlest whisper at our right hand startle us more than the loudest echo from afar. It is a solemn thing, when we gaze intently at the dial of our fate, and listen to the beats that number our vicissitudes, to see its index distinctly pointing to eternity. The exclusive appeal to the historical evidence of futurity is one great cause, I believe, of the feeble effect of this mighty expectation. Till it is felt that Heaven is needed to complete the history of earth, till men become conscious of capacities for which their present sphere of action is too contracted, till the wants of the intellect and the affections cry aloud within them for the boundless and the eternal, the distant words of Christian promise will die away, ere they reach their hearts : there will be no vis-

ible infinitude of hope ; and amid the incessant verbal recognition of the great hereafter, practical doubts will brood over the feelings, which will blight all true sincerity of faith. The character of some of these doubts I proceed to indicate,—doubts, not of direct speculation, not arising from any perception of fallacy in the evidence, not therefore leading to any denial of the doctrine of futurity,—but doubts that lurk obscurely in the feelings, cold, silent, undefined ; that come and go like spectres,—come when we abhor, and vanish when we seek them ; that shun the steady gaze of the intellect, and haunt with fiend-like stare the uplifted eye of broken hope and trembling love. It will appear that these doubts are peculiar to our inferior states of character ; that when the higher parts of our nature are developed, and the adaptation of immortality to our true wants is felt, they disappear.

There are doubts obtruded on us by our *animal* nature. It is not at all surprising that in proportion as we attend to the perishable part of our nature, our nature should appear perishable ; and that in proportion as we neglect the mind, which alone has any heritage in the future, the future should become obscure. True though it is that we are fearfully and wonderfully made, there is something humiliating in the protracted and exclusive study of man's physical organization ; and whatever indications it affords of the designing benevolence of God, it rather troubles than assists the conception of the immortality of man : for that benevolence, being equally manifested in the structures and laws of the brute creation, cannot direct us to the hopes of

higher natures. When the thoughts have been intently fixed on the physiology of the human body, when the frame has been analysed into its several organs, and the functions of our corporeal life described ; or when, in studying the natural history of man, we are led to compare him with the other tribes that people the earth, the imagination rises from such studies with secret uneasiness ; it has been, for the sake of knowledge, to the meaner haunts of our being, just as the philanthropist, for the sake of benevolence, frequents the dingy recesses of sin and misery : it finds itself surrounded with clinging impressions of materialism, from which it must shake itself free, before it can again realise the holier relations and loftier prospects of human existence. Nor is it unusual for death to be presented to us in an aspect which unreasonably, but irresistibly, troubles the heart's diviner trust. Sometimes indeed the last hour of a human life comes on so gentle a wing, that it seems a fit passage of a soul to God : the feeble pulse which flutters into death, the fading eye whose light seems not to be blotted out but only to retire within, the fleeting breath that seems to stop, that the spirit may depart in reverent silence,—are like the signs of a contented exchange of worlds, of a mind that has nothing for which to struggle, because it passes to the peace of God. But when the strife is strong,—when, at the solemn point of existence which seems most to demand an intent serenity of soul, the animal nature starts to its supremacy and fiercely claims the mastery, and clings with convulsive grasp to the margin of mortality, our imaginations are visited with a deeper trouble than would arise

merely from sympathy with the departing sufferer. 'Is this,' we think, 'the transition to the skies,—this, more like the end of hope than the beginning of peace, more like a thrust into the blackest night, than an ushering into the beautiful dawn of the eternal land?' And why is this? It is the tyranny of our animal sympathies; which may well be sceptical of immortality, for it is not for them. The corporeality of our nature is for the time so vehemently forced upon the attention, that we forget what else there is: the half of the being is taken to represent the whole; and that half is really coming to a close. When we retire from the dread impression of this scene, and remember the bright mind eclipsed only during the last hour; when we recognise in its history many a noble toil for truth, many a holy effort of duty, many an exhibition of moral and mental capability too great and gentle to find their gratification here, we gradually return from the shock of nature to the quietude of faith. But this return depends on regarding the body as the instrument of the mind: and there are people who never do this,—men who take their limbs to be their life, and confound their senses with their soul,—who say wise things about the blessings of health and ease, and hear only empty words when there is mention of a full mind, and pure and resolute sentiments of conscience, and earnest affections human and divine. To such,—the sensual,—there is nothing else in man but body; take that from their conceptions, and nothing remains. What then but an absolute blank before their mind can be an existence in which the material interests of our present being utterly

vanish, and a spirituality unknown to them even in idea assumes the place? To say that they must look forwards to it with the same kind of feeling as the musician to becoming deaf, and the artist to becoming blind, fails to convey an adequate idea of the emptiness, the absolute nothingness, of their anticipation. If we could conceive a being created with no inlet of consciousness but the sense of sight,—without thought, without emotion, without other sensation,—a being in fact *all eye*, we perceive that it would be the same thing to him, whether his vision be paralysed, or he himself be planted in the midst of deep and rayless night. To such a one, both conditions would be a total annihilation: as life was nothing more than visual perception, so the privation of such perception would be death: the preservation of the organ would be attended by no consciousness: in eternal darkness, its function, its pleasures and its pains, are for ever gone; and had it never been, its non-existence could not be more perfect. Precisely similar is the view of futurity,—the futurity of the intellectual and social and moral powers of our nature,—to the sensual in whom these powers sleep. All the functions of existence with which he is familiar vanish from him; and as well might he himself be blotted out, as be placed where all the offices and elements of his life disappear. He is an eye dipped in darkness,—an ear left alone in an infinitude of silence; immortality is to him but prolonged paralysis; it has nothing to distinguish it from death. What wonder then that, in proportion as we resemble such a being, our feelings are harassed by a thousand doubts of renovated life.

The doubts are indeed perfectly well founded : for *this* nature there *is* no further life ; its mechanism wears out, and death casts it aside forever ; and, till that higher nature, of which it is the organic instrument, is born to full life within us, we have no kindred or affinity with the eternal state. But when, by nobler culture, by purer experience, by breathing the air of a higher duty, vitality at length creeps into the soul, the instincts of immortality will wake within us. The word of hope will speak to us a language no longer strange. We shall feel like the captive bird carried accidentally to its own land, when, hearing for the first time the burst of kindred song from its native woods, it beats instinctively the bars of its cage in yearning for the free air that is thrilled with so sweet a strain.

There are doubts forced on us by our *selfish* nature. A hard and self-inclosed mind is destitute of the feelings that look most intently on the future, and make it most credible, because most urgently needed, by us. It is rather our sympathetic than our personal happiness that is wounded by the conditions of our mortal being. For ourselves alone, if we love not deeply our own kind, it is usually possible to preserve a decent and sober life, a small order of happiness, respectably ensured from ruin, which will never feel impelled to look up and cry aloud to God. It is when we suffer ourselves to seek a profounder but a frailer bliss ; when the heart possesses a terrible stake in existence ; when we yield ourselves to the strongest love, and yet can love nothing that we may not lose ; that we feel capacities which are mocked by the brevity of life, and totally incapable of exhaus-

tion here. It is our affections chiefly that are disproportioned to our condition : they are an over-match for us in this world. God would never launch so frail a vessel on so stormy a sea, where the roll of every wave may wreck us, were it not designed to float at length on serener waters, and beneath gentler skies. Oh God ! it is terrible to think what may be lost in one human life ; what hope, what joy, what goodness, may drop with one creature into the grave ! how all things, now so full of the energies of a cheerful being, so copious in motive and in peace, so kindled by the smile of Providence, and ringing with the happy voices of nature and our kind, may droop and gloom before us by one little change ! It is not from without, but from within,—from the sacred but changing orb of our own love,—that the light and colours come, in which we see the scenery of existence clad : and if there be an eclipse within, creation mourns beneath a film of darkness. It is, however, in such moments of sorrow, and in the perpetual consciousness that they may come, that we find the strongest call of thought to a more peaceful and stable being ; and that we are urged to fly to the distant regions in which the intercepted light still shines. But all this the heart of the selfish can never know : his sympathies are well-proportioned to the dimensions and the securities of this state : for all that he yet feels, an eternal life would be an enormous over-provision : he has no passionate tenacity of love that clings imploringly to any blessing ; but is able to shrink into his shell of personal ease, and sleep. Nor does the wider benevolence, *the spirit of Christian philanthropy* to which the selfish

man is equally insensible, stimulate less urgently the demand for immortality. How is it possible to study deeply the lot of the great majority of men;—to see them ground down by toil; spending their years in bare self-continuation, and ending life without tasting of its fruits; filled to satiety with labour and starved to death within the mind;—how is it possible to see so much noble capability wasted, so much true blessedness lost, so many, first created a little lower than the angels, and then forced nearly to a level with the brutes,—without providing in our thoughts a future vindication of the Creator,—a life in which the fearful inequality will be compensated, and the suspended good at length born? But the cold and self-regarding mind cannot understand a sentiment like this. It has no such sympathy with the well-being of others as to feel that their habitual privations constitute a moral claim upon the benevolence of God. It has no generous faith in the possibilities of human improvement; but thinking meanly of its kind, is not disconcerted by the meanness of its destiny. Ignorant of the immeasurable contents of our nature, of the resources of our human affections, of the heroic energies of duty, and the sublime peace of God, he sees nothing worth immortalizing; and because he himself would be an anomaly in heaven, he fancies heaven too good for man. Thus selfishness, like sensuality, secretly conscious of its ignobility, and interpreting by its own experience the whole race of human kind, stifles within us the Eternal Hope.

Causes, not moral, like the foregoing, but merely intellectual, tend also to disturb the feelings with doubts



on this subject. Very contracted knowledge and feeble imagination, will usually possess but a fluctuating faith in all truths remote from experience. Though our faith may go far beyond our experience, it must always be chained down by it at a distance : our conceptions of probability are limited by the analogies within our reach : the magnitude of each one's possible must bear some proportion to his actual : the invisible scenes which he imagines will be graduated by the visible which he beholds. In proportion, therefore, as our ideas are few, and the circle of our intellectual perceptions more narrowly bounded, will it be difficult for us to feel the possibility of a state so totally new, so little familiarised to us by any known resemblances to our present condition, as the futurity to which we tend. This incompetency of religious imagination is far from being exclusively attendant on what the world calls ignorance. It may be found often beneath the polished speech, the practised address, the agile faculties of men conspicuous in affairs ; being as much the creation of voluntary habit, as the consequence of helpless incapacity. Aptitude for business is not power of Reason ; and a grandee on the exchange may be a pauper in God's universe. To calculate shrewdly is different from meditating wisely ; and, where turned into an exclusive engagement, is even more hostile to it than the torpor of the entire mind. The pointed, distinct, and microscopic attention which we direct upon the details of human existence here, is unfavorable to the comprehensive vision of a boundless sphere ; the glass through which we best look at the minutiae near us, serves but

to confuse our gaze upon the stars. Growing knowledge, enlarging thought, the reverent estimate of truth and beauty, furnish us with a thousand facilities for illustrating and realizing the unseen, and replenishing its blank abyss with bright creations. Nay, the mental horizon spreads by mere extension of the physical ; and as our station rises above the world, our range of possibilities and our willingness of faith appear to grow. For who can deny the effect of wide Space alone in aiding the conception of vast Time? The spectator who in the dingy cellar of the city, under the oppression of a narrow dwelling, watching the last moments of some poor mendicant, finds incongruity and perplexity in the thought of the eternal state, would feel the difficulty vanish in an instant, were he transplanted to the mountain-top, where the plains and streams are beneath him, and the clouds are near him, and the untainted breeze of Heaven sweeps by, and he stands alone with Nature and with God. And when, in addition to the mere spectacle and love of nature, there is a knowledge of it too ; when the laws and processes are understood which surround us with wonder and beauty every day ; when the great cycles are known through which the material creation passes without decay : then, in the immensity of human hopes, there appears nothing which need stagger faith : it seems no longer strange, that the mind which interprets the material creation should survive its longest period, and be admitted to its remoter realms.

Thus, in proportion as our nature rises in its nobleness, does it realize its immortality. As it retires from

animal grossness, from selfish meanness, from pitiable ignorance or sordid neglect,—as it opens forth into its true intellectual and moral glory,—do its doubts disperse, its affections aspire : the veil is uplifted from the future, the darkness breaks away, and the spirit walks in dignity within the paradise of God's Eternity. What a testimony this to the great truth from which our hope and consolations flow ! What an incitement to seek its bright and steady light by the culture of every holy faculty within us ! The more we do the will of our Father, the more do we feel that this doctrine is indeed of him. Its affinities are with the loftiest parts of our nature ; and in our trust in it, we ally ourselves with the choicest spirits of our race. And while we sympathize with them in their past faith, we prepare to meet them where we may assume their nearer likeness. Ever seek we therefore the things which are above.

## V.

LO ! GOD IS HERE !

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ACTS XVII. 30.

AND THE TIMES OF THIS IGNORANCE GOD WINKED AT ; BUT NOW  
COMMANDETH ALL MEN EVERY WHERE TO REPENT.

PAUL, it would appear, looked with a very different feeling on times past, and times present. Behind him, he saw the age of ignorance and irreligion, so dark and wild, that life appeared to lie quite outside the realm of Providence, and earth to be covered by no heaven. Around him, he beheld the very æra of God, in which the third heavens seemed almost within reach, and life was so filled with voices of duty and hope, that it appeared like some vast whispering gallery, to render what else had been a divine silence and mystery, audible and articulate. Behind, he saw a world abandoned ; from which the great Ruler seemed to have retired, or at least averted the light of his countenance ; to which he spake no word, and gave no intelligible sign ; about whose doings it were painful to say much ; for so little were they in the likeness of his government, so abhorrent from the spirit of his sway, that they must have been enacted during the slumber of his power. But now, the hour of awakening had arrived : the foul

dream of the world's profaneness must be broken ; and Heaven would forbear no more. The divine light was abroad again : divine tones were floating through this lower atmosphere, and came, like solemn music, across the carnival shouts of sensualism and sin. Out of hearing of these tones, the far-travelled Apostle never passed : they reached him through the rush of waters, as he sailed by night over the *Ægean* : the voluble voices of Athens could not drown them : they vibrated through the traffic and the cries of Roman streets, and even pierced the brutal acclamations of the amphitheatre ; they were ubiquitous as God, who was *everywhere* commanding *all* men to repent. Whether in his own life, or in the world, Paul found *the Past, to be profane, the Present, divine.*

With us this order is reversed. Our faith delights to expound, not what God is doing *now*, but what he did *once* ; to prove that *formerly* he was much concerned with the affairs of this earth and the spirits of men, though he has abstained from personal intervention for many ages, and become a spectator of the scene. The point of time at which our thoughts search for his agency, and feel after him to find him, lies not at hand, but far ; belongs not to to-day, but to distant centuries ; and must be reached by an historical memory, not by individual consciousness. To our feelings, the period of Divine absenteeism is the present ; wherein we live on the impression half worn out, of his ancient visitations ; obey as we can the precepts he is understood to have given of old ; and, like children opening again and again the last tattered letter from a parent

mysteriously silent in a foreign land, cheer ourselves with such assurance of his love as he may have put on record in languages anterior to our own. 'O happy age,'—we think,—'that really heard his voice! O glorious souls, that felt his living inspiration! O blessed lot, though it passed through the desert and the fire, that lay beneath the shelter of his peace!' In short, our experience is the opposite of Paul's. That voice which commanded all men to repent, resounds no more; its date has gone clear away into antiquity; and it can faintly reach us only through the dead report of a hundred witnesses. Once it was the very spirit of God quivering over the soul of man,—a mountain-air stirring on the face of the waters. The frosts of time may have fixed the surface, and caught the form; but how different this from the trembling movement of our humanity beneath the sweep of that living breath! No such holy murmur reaches us, to whom the *Present is earthly*, and the *Past, divine*.

Perhaps some one may deny that there is any real variance between Paul's estimate and ours; on the ground that, in his view, the time sacred above all others was *his own*; and in our retrospect *that* time remains so still. Yet it may be conjectured, that if we could be put back into his age, we should hardly see it with his eyes. Possibly enough, we might look about to no purpose for that presence of the Holiest which followed him through life; and listen with disappointed ear, for that whisper that "everywhere" came to him from the Infinite; and though at his side when he was in the third heaven, might see nothing but the walls of

his apartment, in coldest exile from the transports of the skies. If you go into the tent-maker's warehouse, where he worked at Corinth, you find the canvass and the tools, and even the men that ply them, such as you may pass without notice every day. The lane in which he lived in Rome seems too dingy for anything divine, and the noisy neighbors too ordinary to kindle any elevated zeal. The city's heat and din, the common crush of life, the hurry from task to task, seem far enough from the cool atmosphere of prayer, and the glad silence of immortal hopes. And if you converse with the men and women, for whom the Apostle gave his toils and tears, who received the whole affluence of his sympathies, you may be amazed, perchance, that he could find them so interesting; and lament to discover, in such an age of golden days, the vulgar speech, the narrow mind, the selfish will, the envious passions, of these later times. And, taking the converse supposition,—think you, if he had been transplanted from Mars Hill to Westminster, he would have been beyond the hearing of that voice of God which he proclaimed and obeyed?—that the celestial light which rested upon life would have passed away?—that his hope would have been as faint, his worship as unreal, his whole being as mechanical, as ours? Ah, no! let there be a soul of power like his within; and it matters not what weight of world may be cast on it from without. Be we in this century or that,—nay in heaven or on earth,—it is not that we find, but that we must make, the Present holy and divine.

In vain then do we plead, that our view of time coin-

cides with that of Paul. With such temper as we have, we should have listened to him on Areopagus in the spirit of the Epicureans that heard him ; not refusing perhaps to join the light laugh at his enthusiasm ; and wondering how a man with his foot on the solid ground of life and nature, can cast himself madly into the abyss of a fancied futurity, and an absent God. And as, in yielding to the suggestions of such temper, we should have felt falsely, and have looked on Paul's age with a deluded eye, so would *his* be the true vision of our times ; and his earnest proclamation of the continued sanctity of existence would show his discerning intuition of realities concealed from us. For, God has not faded into a remembrance : he has not retired from this scene with the generations known only to tradition. His energies have no era ; his sentiments cannot be obsolete ; " his compassions fail not." Why, even sense and material nature, his poorest and faintest interpreters, rebuke this foolish dream,—that he *was*, rather than *is*. They forbid us to think of him thus, were it only in the mere character of Creator. They show us, in the very structure of our globe,—in the rocks beneath our feet,—in the vast cemeteries and monuments they disclose of departed races of creatures,—that Creation is not single, not single but successive ; not an act, but a process ; not the work of a week or of a century, but of immeasurable ages ; not moreover past, but continuous and everlasting ; as busy, as mysterious, as vast now, as in the darkest antiquity : so that Genesis tells the story of last week, as truly as of the six days that ushered in the world's first Sabbath. The universe indeed



is not so much a definite machine which once he made, and beyond which he dwells to see it move, as his own infinite abode and ever-changing manifestation ;—living, because the dwelling of his power ;—boundless, because the chamber of his presence ; ever fresh, because the receptacle of his designs ; fair, because the expression of his love. Now, as of old, he that will listen with the open ear of meditation, may surely hear the Lord God walking in his garden of creation in the cool of every day.

The same temper which leads us to search for Deity only in distant times, causes us to banish him also into distant space ; and persuades us that he is not *here*, but *there*. He is thought to dwell above, beneath, around the earth ; but who ever thinks of meeting him on its very dust ? Awfully he shrouds the abyss ; and benignly he gazes on us from the stars : but in the field and the street, no trace of him is felt to be. Under the ocean, and in the desert, and on the mountain-top, he is believed to rest ; but into the nearer haunts of town and village, we rarely conceive him to penetrate. Yet where better could wisdom desire his presence, than in the common homes of men,—in the thick cares and heavy toils, and grievous sorrows, of humanity ? For surely, if Nature needs him much in her solitudes, life requires him more in the places of passion and of sin. And in truth, if we cannot feel him near us in this world, we could approach him, it is greatly to be feared, in no other. Could a wish remove us bodily to any distant sphere supposed to be divine, the heavenly presence would flit away as we arrived ; would occupy rather

the very earth we had been eager to quit ; and would leave us still amid the same material elements, that seem to hide the Infinite vision from our eyes. Go where we may, we seem mysteriously to carry our own circumference of darkness with us : for who can quit his own centre, or escape the point of view,—or of blindness,—which belongs to his own identity ? He who is not with God already, can by no path of space find the least approach ; in vain would you lend him the wing of Angel or the speed of light ; in vain plant him here or there,—on this side of death or that : he is in the outer darkness still ; having that inner blindness which would leave him in pitchy night, though, like the angel of the Apocalypse, he were standing in the sun. But ceasing all vain travels, and remaining with his foot upon this weary earth, let him subside into the depths of his own wonder and love ; let the touch of sorrow, or the tears of conscience, or the toils of duty, open the hidden places of his affections ;—and the distance, infinite before, wholly disappears : and he finds, like the Patriarch, that though the stone is his pillow, and the earth his bed, he is yet in the very house of God, and at the gate of heaven. Oh ! my friends, if there be nothing celestial without us, it is only because all is earthly within ; if no divine colours upon our lot, it is because the holy light is faded on the soul : if our Father seems distant, it is because we have taken our portion of goods, and travelled into a far country, to set up *for ourselves*, that we may foolishly *enjoy*, rather than reverently *serve*. Whenever he is imagined to be remote and almost slumbering, be assured it is human faith that is

really heavy and on the verge of sleep ; drowsy with too much ease, or tired with too much sense ; that it has lapsed from the severe and manly strivings of duty and affection, and given itself over to indulgence, and become the lazy hireling of prudence. An Epicurean world inevitably makes an Epicurean God : and when we cease to do anything from spontaneous loyalty to the great Ruler, we necessarily doubt whether he can have occasion to do anything for us. Such doubts are vainly attacked by speculative proof, and evidence skillfully arranged : the clearest and the cloudiest intellect are liable to them alike : for they arise from the practical feebleness of the inner man ; from a dwindled force in the earnest, self-forgetful affections ; and can be dissipated only by trustful abandonment once more to some object of duty and devotion. The times and people that have vividly felt the proximity of God, have always been characterized by hearty and productive affections ; by vast enterprises and great sacrifices ; by the seeds of mighty thought dropped upon the world, and the fruits of great achievements contributed to human history. In contact with every grand era in the experience of mankind, will be found *the birth of a religion* ;—a fresh discovery of the preternatural and mysterious ; a plenary sense of God ; the descent of a Holy Spirit on waiting hearts ; a day of Pentecost to strong and faithful souls, giving them the utterance of a divine persuasion, and dispersing a new Gospel over the world. We, alas ! are far enough,—far at least as the days of Wesley,—from any such period of inspiration in the past ; perhaps, however, the nearer to it in the

future, as there is no night unfollowed by the dawn. It is not permitted us too curiously to search the hidden providences of our humanity : but one thing we cannot fail to notice ; that a return to simple, undisguised affections,—to natural and veracious speech,—to earnest and inartificial life,—has characterized every great and noble period, and all morally powerful and venerable men. To such tastes and affections, and to the secret rule of conscience which presides among them, we must learn to trust, whatever be the seductions of opinion, and the sophistries of expediency, and even the pleadings of the speculative intellect. When thus we fear to quench his spirit, God will not suffer our time to be a dreary and unconsecrated thing. Swept by the very borders of his garment, we shall not look far for his glorifying presence. The poorest outward condition will do nothing to obliterate the solemnity from life. Nay, of nothing may we be more sure than this ; that if we cannot sanctify our present lot, we could sanctify no other. Our heaven and our almighty Father are there or nowhere. The obstructions of that lot are given for us to heave away by the concurrent touch of a holy spirit, and labour of strenuous will ; its gloom, for us to tint with some celestial light : its mysteries are for our worship ; its sorrows for our trust ; its perils for our courage ; its temptations for our faith. Soldiers of the cross, it is not for us, but for our Leader and our Lord, to choose the field : it is ours, taking the station which he assigns, to make it the field of truth and honour, though it be the field of death.

It is a part of the illusion, which contrasts us with Paul,

that we esteem God to be *without* us, rather than *within* us; a mode of conception which I believe to be ultimately fatal to that religious life, from the incipient feebleness of which it originally springs. What has been really meant by those devout men who have freely spoken of God's communion with them, and of the thoughts which he has put into the heart? That these thoughts did actually arise and must be accepted as facts, will hardly be denied. Nor will it be doubted that, in the thinker's view, they appeared most high and solemn; and that in no other way could their beauty and authority be expressed, than by calling them emanations from the supreme Source of the binding and the beautiful. To affirm the purest and deepest movements of our nature to be from God, is the natural utterance of full reverence for them; to deny their origin from him, is a distinct profession that that reverence has declined: they are sought for at a lower source, because they have descended to a meaner place. And while this denial indicates a fainter piety, it is no sign of stronger reason. What emboldens you to contradict the universal testimony of souls aloft in worship,—the natural language of poet, saint, and prophet? How do you know that in the affections that most glorify their hearts, there is no immediate light of Heaven? You say, perhaps, they are experienced by the worshipper's own mind, and must be parts of the nature that feels them. But it does not follow that, because they are included in the consciousness of men, they indicate no presence and living touch of God. Or you say, there is no miracle in them, and they come and go by laws not quite untraceable.

But this only shows that the divine agency, if there, is free from disorder and caprice, and loves to be constant in behalf of those who are faithful to its conditions. Or do you complain of the idle fanaticisms, which often have preferred this tempting claim? Idle they may be to you, to whose mind they stand in quite different relation; but not perhaps to those whom assuredly they raised to higher life. We are not all alike; and God does not exist for any miserable egotist alone. We are all indeed set in one infinite sphere of universal reason and conscience; but scattered over it to follow separate circles, and attain every variety of altitude in faith. Like stars upon the same meridian, whose culminating points cannot be alike, we touch our supreme height at different elevations: and the measure which is far down on the course of one mind, may be the acmé of religion in another. And it is as worthy of God to lift every soul to the ethereal summit proper to it, as to roll the heavens, and call forth their lights by interval and number, and see that "not one faileth." And as there is no ground in experience for rejecting the old language of devotion, neither is there any in the claim of consistent philosophy. We find men ready enough to allow that there is no place where God is not, perhaps no time when his external power is not active in some realm or other. And why then withhold from him that internal and spiritual sphere of which all else is but the theatre and the temple? What can dead space *want* with the divine presence, compared with the ever-perilled soul of man, perpetually trembling on the verge of grief or sin? Shall we coldly speculate on the physical Omni-

presence of the Infinite, and question the ubiquity of his moral power?—diffuse him as an atmosphere, and forget that he is a Mind?—plead for his mechanical action on matter, and doubt the contact of spirit with spirit?—admit the agency of the artist on his work, and deny the embrace of the Father and the child? It were indeed strange, if this anomaly were true. Where is this blessed object of our worship, if not within our souls? What possible ground is there for affirming him to be elsewhere and *not* here? Far more plausible would the limitation be, if we were to declare him manifestly existent here alone. All external things are apprehensible by sense, and it is to discover the outward creation that the senses are given. All internal things are apprehended by thought, and it is to seize this far higher order of realities, that thought is given. Never was eye or ear made perceptive of Deity: “no man hath heard his voice at any time or seen his form:” he is the object of simply spiritual discernment, the holy image, mysteriously shaped forth from the quarries of our purest thought, and glowing with life, beauty and power, in the inmost sanctuary of the mind. And his reality there is a certainty of the same rank as the existence of the universe without. There is truth then, and only a wise enthusiasm, in the established strains of Christian piety; invoking the presence of the Holiest to the soul as his loved retreat, and humbly referring to him the purest thoughts and best desires. I pretend not to draw the untraceable line that separates his being from ours. The decisions of the Will, doubtless, are our own, and constitute the proper sphere of our personal agency. But

in a region higher than the Will,—the realm of spontaneous thought and emotion,—there is scope enough for his “abode with us.” Whatever is most deep within us is the reflection of himself. All our better love, and higher aspirations, are the answering movements of our nature in harmonious obedience to his spirit. Whatever dawn of blessed sanctity, and wakening of purer perceptions, opens on our consciousness, are the sweet touch of his morning light within us. His inspiration is perennial; and he never ceases to work within us, if we consent to will and to do his good pleasure. He befriends our moral efforts; encourages us to maintain our resolute fidelity and truth; accepts our co-operation with his designs against all evil; and reveals to us many things far too fair and deep for language to express. But, while he is thus prompt to come with his Spirit to the help of seeking hearts, he is expelled by the least unfaithfulness; and when the “spirit of truth” is driven away, this holy “Comforter” no longer remains. To receive the promise, we must deserve the prayer, of Christ,—that we “may be kept from the evil,” and “sanctified through the truth.” Finding a Holy of Holies within us, we need not curiously ask whether its secret voices are of ourselves or of the Father. Christ felt how, within the deeps of our spiritual nature, the personalities of Heaven and earth might become entwined together and indissolubly blended: “Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, and they also one in us.” And so, the Holy spirit within us, the spirit of Christ, and the spirit of God, are after all but one;—a blessed Trinity, our part in which gives to our souls a dignity most humbling yet august.



## VI.

### CHRISTIAN SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS.

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#### GENESIS III. 22.

AND THE LORD GOD SAID, BEHOLD, THE MAN IS BECOME AS ONE OF US, TO KNOW GOOD AND EVIL.

It is a favorite doctrine of one of the wisest thinkers of our day, that "if Adam had remained in Paradise, there had been no anatomy, and no metaphysics." In other words, it is only on the lapse from the state of health, that we find we have a body ; and on the loss of innocence, that we become conscious of a soul. Disease and wrong are the awakers of our reflection : they bring our outward pursuits to a pause, and force us to look within : and the extent of our self-study and self-knowledge may be taken as a measure of the depth to which the poison of evil has penetrated into our frame. The man who, instead of being surrendered to spontaneous action, voluntarily retires to think, has fallen sick, and can effect no more. The art which has recovered from its trance of inspiration and found out that it has rules, begins to manufacture and ceases to create. The literature which directs itself to an end, and critically seeks the means, may yield the produce of ingenuity, but not the fruit of genius. The society

which understands its own structure, talks of its grievances, plumes itself on its achievements, and prescribes for its own case, is already in a state of inevitable decadence. And the religion which has begun to *inquire*, to sift out its errors, and treasure up its truths, has lost its breath of healthy faith, and only gasps in death. With sighs and irresistible longings, does this noble writer look back upon imaginary ages of involuntary heroism, when the great and good knew not their greatness and goodness, and genius was found which was a secret to itself, and men lived for God's sake, instead of for their own. Could he realize his dream of perfection, he would stock the world with activity, and fill it with men who know not what they do.

This celebrated paradox could never occupy a mind like Mr. Carlyle's, did it not envelop an important and seasonable truth. But before we give ourselves up to the despondency it must inspire, it is as well to see whether there is no illusion in its sadness; and whether its pathetic complaints may not even be turned, by an altered modulation, into a hymn of thanksgiving.

To sigh after an unconscious life,—what is it but to protest against the very *power of thought*? To *think* is not merely to have ideas,—to be the theatre across which images and emotions are marched;—but to sit in the midst as master of one's conceptions; to detain them for audience, or dismiss them at a glance; to organize them into coherence and direct them to an end. It implies at every step the memory and deliberate review of past states of mind, the voluntary estimate of them, and control over them. It is a royal act in which

we *possess* the objects which engage us, and are not possessed by them. It is an act of intense self-consciousness, whose whole energy consists in this, that the mind is kindled by seeing itself: as if the light were to become sensitive, and turn also to vision.

Again, to sigh for an unconscious life, is to protest against *Conscience*. For what is this faculty but, as its name denotes, a *knowledge with one's self* of the worth and excellence of the several principles of action by which we are impelled? Shall we desire to be impelled by them still, only remaining in the dark as to their value and our obligations?—to be the creature of each, as its turn may come, without choice between the baser and the nobler, or perception of difference between appetite and inspiration? Duty implies, in every form, that a man is entrusted with himself; that he is expected to overlook and direct himself; to maintain therefore an open eye on the spiritual world within, and preserve throughout a sacred order.

And once more, to pray for an unconscious life, is to desire an incapacity for *Faith*. For what is faith, but trust in an Infinite and Holy One, of whom we could have no conception, if our aspirations did not transcend our realities; if the ideal faculty did not survey the actual and find it wanting? Our own spirit is the vestibule which we must enter, as threshold to the temple of the Eternal, and wherein alone we can catch any whisper from the Holy of Holies. A man who had never found his soul, could assuredly never see his God.

Scarcely can we admit a theory to be true, which

implies that Thought, Duty, Will, and Faith, are so many diseases in our constitution, over which it becomes us to weep the tears of protestation. These, and the self-consciousness which renders us capable of them, are the supreme glory of our nature ; raising it above the mere instinctive life of the brute creation, making it agent as well as instrument, and giving it two worlds to live in instead of one.

If, however, this power of self-consciousness be assigned to us as our special dignity and strength, it may be turned to our weakness and our shame. The peculiar faculty in man, of *overlooking* himself, is but the needful condition and natural preparation for another,—that of *directing* himself. Why show him his place, but that he may choose his way? Why wake him up,—alone of all creatures,—if the nightmare of necessity is to sit upon him still? If his course be determined *for* him, and not *by* him, why not lock him fast, like all similar natures, in the interior of his perceptions and impulses, as in the scenery of a dream, instead of carrying him outside to survey them? A thing that is entirely at the disposal of foreign forces, that is moved hither and thither by laws imposed upon it, would plainly be none the better for the gift of self-knowledge. If the planet, urged through an inflexible orbit by determinate mechanism, were made aware of its own history, no hair's breadth of guidance would the revelation give. If the tree could study its own physiology, its growth would be no nobler, and its fruit no fairer. If the animal could scrutinize its instincts, they would perform no new function, and afford no

happier guidance. And if man can superintend his own mind it is because he is *not*, like the planet, the tree, the brute, the mere theatre on which forces display themselves, but a fresh power in himself, able to originate action in the same sense in which God originates the universe. Every sentient being perceives enough for its own direction: if you look round the circle of its perceptions, you ascertain the sources of its guidance. Animals, that are at the exclusive disposal of the external objects related to them, are alive to the external world alone. Man, capable of withstanding extrinsic agencies, and having a creative centre within him, is alive to his own soul as well. Shut us fast up in the line of nature, and nature is all that we want to know. Set us free to stand above nature, and live with an upper region of the spirit stretching beyond her realm, not subject only but also Lord, and we need for the first time that self-consciousness which is the condition of liberty, and the first element of wisdom. It is because we have a *work of choice* assigned us, because we are entrusted with the power to control our instincts, and subject the spontaneous natural life to the voluntary and the spiritual, that we alone have the faculty of reflection. It is the superior light awarded to our special obligations. Self-consciousness, thus super-added to our mere sentient nature, becomes, by this association not less our temptation than our dignity. If pain and pleasure constituted the ultimate interests of life, we could dispense with the attribute of self-inspection as well as the brutes: in short, we should be in that case but a nobler sort of brute, differing from other

species only in having more numerous resources for our sensitive nature,—a richer table spread for more varied appetites, of the palate or of the mind. Senses, however multiplied ; taste, however exquisite ; capacities for enjoyment, never so fine,—*want* no faculty of reflection, and must know that it is not for them. But while it is not for their sakes, it is of necessity in their presence, and within their hearing, that the *arcana* of life are revealed to us. Appetite and Conscience, like two spirits of the lower and the upper world, live together in the same house, so that the revelation made for one is little likely to remain secret from the other : and it is in the power of the fiend to steal the privacy of the angel, and break the seals of the divinest message. Hence there comes about an impious abuse of the godlike gift of self-conscious life : and instead of serving as the handmaid of duty, it is degraded into the pander of appetite. Nothing can be baser than this sweet poisoning of moral truth for the relish of sin. Thus to use our human secret as a cunning way of getting an advantage over the brutes, is a downright betrayal of the confidence of God,—a bartering in Hell of that which we have overheard in Heaven.

This faculty then, of reflection upon himself, his life, his nature, his relations, is the peculiarity which, in proportion as it becomes marked, places man at a distance from the brutes. When applied to its true purpose, of surveying his responsibilities, judging his modes of activity and affection, and enforcing a Christian order throughout his soul, it becomes a godlike prerogative, and lifts him to angel life. When perverted to a false

purpose, of prying into his passive sensations, and discovering the means of getting drunk with instinctive pleasures, and turning the healthy hunger of nature into the feverish greed of Epicurism, it becomes a fallen spirit, and allies its possessor with the fiends. Man, the self-conscious animal, is the saddest spectacle in creation : man, the self-conscious Christian, one of the noblest. Reflecting vitality is hypochondria and disease : reflecting spirituality is clearness and strength. /

This general doctrine has a direct bearing upon a question which is often raised, and which presses upon the attention of the present age with an anxious earnestness :—What is the effect on human character of a high and complicated civilization? Are its vast accumulation of commodities, its rapid circulation of activity and thought, its minute division of employments, its close interlacing of interests, its facilities for class-organization, to be looked upon with joy and gratulation, as so many triumphs of intelligence and refinement over ignorance and barbarism ; or with grief and consternation, as the gathering of an uncontrollable and aimless power, destined, like the mad Hercules, to destroy the offspring of its strength? The exulting and jubilant feeling on this matter which prevailed some years ago, is now generally replaced, I believe, in thoughtful minds, by a more sober and even melancholy order of expectations. The change may be justified, if it be made a step, not to passive despair, but to the faithful and energetic performance of a new class of social duties. Let us search for some principle which may aid in the solution of this great problem.

The specific effect on human character produced by a high state of civilization may be expressed in a single phrase : it develops the self-consciousness of men to an intense degree, or, to borrow the venerable language of Scripture, immeasurably increases their "knowledge of good and evil." This indeed arises necessarily from our living so closely in the presence of each other. A perfectly solitary being, who had a whole planet to himself, would remain, I suppose, forever incapable of knowing himself and reflecting upon his thoughts and actions. He would continue, like other creatures, to *have* feelings and ideas, but would not make them his *objects* and bring them under his Will. This human peculiarity would remain latent in him, till he was introduced before the face of some kindred being, and he saw his nature reflected in another mind. Looking into the eyes of a living companion, changing with laughter and with tears, flashing with anger, drooping with sleep, he finds the mirror of himself ; the passions of his inner life are revealed to him ; and he becomes a *person* instead of a *living thing*. In proportion as society collects more thickly around a man, this primitive change deepens and extends : the unconscious, instinctive life, which remains predominant in savage tribes, and visible enough in spare populations everywhere, gradually retires. He knows all about his appetites, and how to serve them ; can name his feelings, feign them, stifle them ; can manage his thoughts, fly from them, conceal them ; can meditate his actions, link them into a system, protect them from interrupting impulse, and direct them to an end ; can go through the length and



breadth of life with mind grossly familiar with its wonders, or reverently studious of its wisdom ; and look on Death, with the eye of an undertaker, or through the tears of a saint. In an old and artificial community, all the common products of experience appear stale and exhausted, and ingenuity is plied for the means of awakening some new emotion. The inmost recesses of our nature are curiously explored, and its most sacred feelings submitted to the coolest criticism, and brought under the canons of art. The self-consciousness of individuals is shared by Society at large ; it studies itself, talks of its past, is anxious about its future ; becomes aware of its own mechanism, and tries to estimate its strength. And with a universal discussion of wide social problems, an unparalleled egoism and isolation are apt to seize upon every sect, class, and nation.

If this be true, then we must admit that a high civilization unfolds the characteristic endowment of our nature ; and so far, may be said to raise and dignify it, and leave far behind the mere animal and instinctive life which belongs to beings of lower grade. The most ignorant man in England possesses a knowledge of good and evil, and a various skill in commanding them, which the hoariest patriarch in a barbarian village would look upon with awe.

It is only however in the Naturalist's scale, not in the Christian, that man is elevated by the influences of artificial society. He becomes a well-marked specimen of his kind, broadly separated from other races upon earth : but how he ranks among spiritual beings,—whether he approaches the confines of heaven, or touch-

ès the verge of Hell,—is wholly undecided still. Superior *knowledge of good and evil* involves no change in the *proportionate love of them*; self-consciousness being a neutral faculty, the condition alike of whatever is pure and noble, and of all that is most foul and mean; the ground at once of the fidelity of Abdiel and the guilt of Lucifer. Hence it is that the mere progress of civilization involves no spiritual advance, and miserably disappoints those who trusted that it was to deliver men from the yoke of their follies and their sins. Vast as is the spectacle of our material magnificence, and intense as may be the traces of mental vitality, there is no certain decline of selfishness and corruption in any class: or if on the right hand you can point to some evil extinguished, on the left there springs some new enormity to balance the success. How many are there who basely avail themselves of all the ease and luxury of our complicated civilization, compared with the few who feel its obligations, and take up its work! How little security do the most practised thought and refined scholarship seem to afford against shameful Jesuitry and abject superstition! And how often is the nimble intelligence of the artizan wholly unproductive of any self-restraint or reverence! The mere *cleverness* indeed of the modern townsman, derived from the heated and sensitive atmosphere around him, implies no hardy spiritual life within him, and ensures no moral thoughtfulness or wisdom. It is a mere aptitude for the germination of ideas of any sort; whereby flowers of Paradise may come sprouting up without ripening their proper fruits, or the deadly nightshade drop

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its poison unperceived. Intellectual irritability may leave the conscience wholly dead. And assuredly only that knowledge which a man wins for himself by the spontaneous efforts of his own mind has the proper and purifying effect of *truth* on him, and renders his nature *clearer* than it was before.

And unhappily this self-acquired knowledge and faculty are, in one respect, less likely to be found among us in these days than of old. The direct influence of occupation is less and less favorable to their production. Nothing that has ever been advanced by economists can convince me, that the extreme division of employments, which characterizes modern industrial operations, is anything but deadening and unhealthy to the mental nature of those engaged in them. To spend every working day of half or the whole of life, not in a craft of various nicety and skill, but in a solitary process of a single manufacture, in tying threads or pointing pins, can assuredly give no discipline to any faculty, unless those of muscular alacrity or mental patience: and compared with the work of an earlier world, I should as little call this *skill*, as I should class among literary men a scribe who should devote his time to crossing *t* s and dotting *i* s. With long habit the monotony of such a lot may cease to be positively felt. But it taxes no worthy power: it enlists no natural interest: it presents only vacancy and listlessness to the thought: and the more so, as the work is another's and not the laborer's own. The occupation does not educate the man. It may be true, in point of fact, that workers of this class are as intelligent as others.

But if so, this is owing to influences extrinsic to the cause on which I dwell, and in spite of it; especially to their residence in the stimulant atmosphere of great cities, and the habit of association with large bodies of men. And this intellectual counteraction itself, there is reason to fear, is purchased at the cost of vast moral dangers. For, in proportion as men cease to have an intelligent interest in their work, and go through it with the weariness of a necessary task, do they quit it with a susceptibility to foreign excitements, and a more open avidity for the temptations of the passions: and losing the even glow of a constant activity, they fall under fearful inducement to alternate the stagnant blood of dulness with the throbbing pulse of revelry.

Who then can be so blind as to deny the dangers amid which we live? We have created around us a scale of opportunity, and temptation, and risk, frightfully vast. We are wholly out of reach of the narrow safety of simple and instinctive life. We stand in the presence of a gigantic amount of good and evil. Yet we have not stronger spirits to bear the mightier strain. So far as our condition forms us, we are less *complete* men, and therefore of less massive stability, than were our forefathers. The moral structure of society partakes of the character of those huge machines which have done so much to make at once its wealth and weakness: each man being but as a screw or pinion of the whole, locked into a system that holds him fast or whirls him on, and having no longer a separate symmetry and worth. The results indeed which are turned out from this involuntary co-operation of parts, are of

overwhelming magnitude and wonderful variety. Our country is a vast congeries of exaggerations. Enormous wealth and saddest poverty, sumptuous idleness and saddest toil, princely provision for learning, and the most degrading ignorance, a large amount of laborious philanthropy, but a larger of unconquered misery and sin, subsist side by side, and terrify us by the preternatural contrast of brilliant colouring with blackest shade. It is appalling to think of the moral cost (a cost most needless too) at which England has become materially great. Do you found that greatness on the culture of the soil? Alas! where is the labourer by whose hand it has been tilled? In a cabin with his children, where the domestic decencies cannot be, and where Christ, did he enter, might give his pity, but could hardly ask obedience. Or do you point rather to our mineral wealth? See the picture which has scarcely ceased to be true, of crawling women, and harnessed children, of whose toil this glory comes? I know not which is most Heathenish, the guilty negligence of our lofty men, or the fearful degradation of the low. But this I do believe, that unless some holier spirit dart quickly down for the conversion of our rich and great, put into them a wise and Christian heart, and dispose them to sacrifices never dreamt of yet; our social repentance will come too late, and we shall die with our Jerusalem, seeing only the image of a tearful Christ, and hearing the words, "Oh that thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace!"

Moreover, we live, as we have seen, in an age of

excited and self-conscious men. And in all minds awakened and reflective to even a very moderate degree, there arises and accumulates a secret fund of dissatisfaction ; a dark, mysterious speck of care upon the heart, which turns to a point of explosive ruin in bad men, to a seed of fruitful sorrow with the good. The natural mind, untouched by religious wisdom, always refers its wants and miseries to outward things, which alone it strives to mend and change. So this hidden discontent leads men to love themselves the more, and quarrel with their neighbors, *until* they become Christians in soul : and *then* it shows them a far higher truth, and leads them to love their neighbors and reproach themselves. The strife and struggle which are inseparable from our self-conscious life, are directed to mutual hate, while under the guidance of self ; to common aspiration, under the discipline of Christ. Who can doubt that under our present spiritual condition, it is the anarchy, and not the love, to which this feeling tends ? And who would not pray for an infusion of the light of God to paint the bow of peace and promise on the cloud where the muffled thunder growls ? Oh ! that to us, otherwise than to Elijah in the cave, it may be given to hear the still small voice, not after, but before, the strong wind, the earthquake, and the fire.

To avert the dangers, and remedy the peculiar evils of our social condition, many conjoint agencies are doubtless required. But there is not one whose neglect offers more certain peril, whose right and timely application presents more reasonable hope, than a Chris-

tian training for the new generation of our people. Could this, indeed, be universally given, could all good men set to work with one heart and hand, and see to it that no desert spot be unreclaimed, all would yet be well. But, alas! we are so afraid of each other's doctrines, that we cannot cure each other's sins: and while the most appalling evils threaten us, and more than once the symptomatic smoke has puffed up from the social volcano, we stand round the crater and discuss theology! Ah! how much more is there in our Christendom of the contentious mind, than of the disciple's pure and unperturbed heart! Which, I would know, is the worse evil, an actual gin-shop, or a possible heresy? Yet in dread of the latter, we cannot unite together in the only means of putting down the former. However, by such means as our infirmities still leave open, we must *go and teach this people*. In proportion as their occupations educate them less, and their circumstances tempt them more, a *direct and proposed culture* must be provided;—a culture which keeps in view the great primary end of responsible existence; which looks not at their trade, but at their souls, and brings them not as apt servants to the mill, but as holy children to their God. Education in the Christian sense, is truly everlasting: childhood preparing for maturity, maturity for age, and the whole of life for death and Heaven. The early training of the young is but that portion of this series, which prepares for self-government and the exercise of Freewill within the limits of Christ's law. Doubtless the responsibility of this task rests, by the decree of Nature and Providence,

with the parents to whom the young life is committed as a trust ; nor will it ever have settled on its genuine basis, till there shall exist, in every class, an effective domestic sentiment, sufficient to sustain it. But amid the wide decay of the old and healthful parental conscience, it becomes needful to awaken a wider interest in the work, and to call upon neighborhood and country to take up the neglected office of the home. Nor should any individual, or any family, exempt from the constant cares of subsistence, be held to have discharged obligations of the Christian life, till they freely give some steady help to this essential work : and provide some fitting care for the neglected child, as still an infant disciple claimed by the arms, and consecrated by the benediction, of their heavenly Lord.



## VII.

### THE UNCLOUDED HEART.

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JOHN V. 30.

MY JUDGMENT IS JUST, BECAUSE I SEEK NOT MINE OWN WILL, BUT  
THE WILL OF THE FATHER WHICH HATH SENT ME.

For the training of goodness, the ancient reliance was on the right discipline of habit and affection: the modern is rather on illumination of the understanding. The notion extensively prevails that vice, being only the mistaken pursuit of that personal happiness for which virtue is an equal but more sagacious aspirant, is a blunder of the intellect; a defective or erroneous view of things; and, like the optical delusions incident to weak eyes, to be cured by use of the most approved instruments for seeing clearly. The guilty and degraded will, it is said, differs from the pure and noble, not by aiming at a less innocent end, but by being less happy in its choice of means: point out the miscalculation, instruct it to weigh causes with greater nicety in future; and you cannot fail to promote the needful reformation. The sinner is but the most deplorable of fools; and if you banish folly, you extinguish sin.

This prescription for the advancement of human excellence possesses an apparent simplicity, which gives

great attraction to some minds. All the varieties of character among men it reduces to an arrangement understood; distributing them along a single line in the order of their intelligence. It seems to sweep away all mystery from the moral emotions, whose mystery and intensity had awed and startled us; and converting them into plain judgments of the intellect. It makes them the voice of man instead of God. Temporarily, however, the value of this tempting theory wears, the moment we seek to use it. Let its ingenious advocate try it upon the miser, the hypocrite, the insane candidate for glory; let him reason with them on their ignorance and imbecility of judgment, expose every fallacy of self-justification, and establish against them an unanswerable case of mistake; then let him come and tell us, whether he has made them generous, just, and meek. Perhaps he will own his failure, but persevere in ascribing it to the faulty state of his pupils' understanding, rather than to the instinctive affection of their passions. 'I could not convince them,' he will say, 'of their error; or, if my arguments impressed them at the moment, the person passed away; and habit proved the more successful advocate, because it was, though not the truer, the more importunate.' But were not your appeals at least forcible, and your instruction indisputably true? Must there must be something in the heart where evil passions dwell, that baffles the chance of reason; that defies from evidence its natural force, and gives to error its deserved triumph. And what advantage do we gain by representing men as the subjects, and their

morality as truths, of the pure intellect, if it be an intellect that may lose its distinguishing function, and become inaccessible to just persuasion? What comfort is it to know that guilt is only error, if it be error so peculiar as to be insensible to the merits of the most unquestionable proof? Why tell us that right and wrong are but the love of happiness making its computations, when it is admitted that passion was never computed out of the heart, and that self-interest itself is whiffed away by the tempest of its rage? It is true, that you have *only* to give the slave of guilty passions a different view of the objects of desire, and he is set free from his miserable thralldom. It is equally true, that you have *only* to make the collapsed paralytic start up and run,—and he will be well.

No doubt, the weakest reason and the most ungovernable desires are constantly found together. But there are at least two ways of reading connected appearances like these. The attempt to resolve all the phenomena of character into a condition of the understanding is a futile exaggeration. The great author of Christianity, reversing the order of the explanation, placed the truth in a juster point of view. He well knew that if, sometimes, because the reason is darkened, the passions are awake, it more often happens that because the passions are awake, the reason is eclipsed. To him it could not but be clear, from consciousness itself, that pure sympathies make a clear intellect, and with their sweet breath, wonderfully open to the mind new perceptions of things heavenly. While auditors, feeling “that never man spake like this man,” asked, “how knoweth he

letters, having never learned?" Jesus led them to a different explanation of his wisdom, "My judgment is just, *because* I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father who hath sent me." And he instructed others how to gain a like discernment of things divine, when he said, "If any will do *his* will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." The words express a universal truth. Whatever be the work on which the judgment may be engaged, it will be invariably aided by the natural sympathies of a just, disinterested and holy mind.

Even in his abstruser toils, these are often the wise man's mightiest power. The most turbid clouds that darken the vision of reason are those which interest, and fear, and ambition spread: and these the pure affections sweep away. They give to the soul the unspeakable freedom of just intents and elevated trusts: and where there exist no complicated aims, no retarding anxieties, but the whole absolute energy of a mind is gathered upon the search of truth, it is amazing what vast achievements may be made. How often will a child, by mere force of unconsciousness and simplicity, penetrate to the centre of some great truth with a startling ease and directness. And in this the greatness of genius is like the power of a child: it is as much moral as intellectual; it arises from emotions so distinct and earnest as to secure singleness of purpose and vivacity of expression; from some absorbing reverence which disenthral the mind from lower passions, and gives it courage to be true. There is always a presumption that a pure-hearted will be a right-minded man; and it is

delightful to see such a one stand up before the ambitious sophist, and dart on his ingenuities a clear ray of conscience that scatters them like mist. The divine light of a good mind is too much for the mystifications of guilt. "The foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of men."

All the great hindrances to impartiality in the quest of truth have obviously their seat in some class of selfish feelings. Interest, promising to one set of opinions emolument and honour, and to their opposite poverty and disgrace; or passing over to the future world, and there displaying to us the alternative of absolute blessedness or ruin,—crushes the natural justice of the understanding, and offers stupendous temptations to palter with evidence, and shuffle inconvenient doubts away. No inquirer can fix a direct and clear-sighted gaze towards truth, who is casting side-glances all the while on the prospects of his soul. Again, the excessive eagerness about reputation produces a thousand pitiable distortions of understanding. In one it takes the shape of a determination to be original (which, I suppose, never befel any man by deliberate resolve), and so extinguishes his perception of all ancient excellence, and confines his appreciation to his own obscurities and affectations. In another it passes into an opposite folly,—the pride of being peculiarly moderate and sound; and so he dreads eccentricities far more than falsehoods, and weighs proprieties, instead of investigating truths. And what is the partizanship that wears every good man's heart, but a collection of selfish feelings, fatal to all the equities of reason; a gross as-

sociation of the idea of self with abstract questions? It is said to be of service in keeping alive the mental activity of the community; but how poor a service, when the activity consists so largely in the ferment of bad passions; and conducts the tranquil tasks of reason in the spirit of a gamester. Argument, in such case, loses its natural power of persuasion, and operates like a weapon of vengeance; only raising higher the note of triumph in those who wield it, and irritating instead of convincing the minds that it assails. Indeed it is humiliating to think how poor a pittance of reasoning conducts the gigantic mutations of human sentiment; how arguments, at which a quiet understanding would smile, rise to grave importance in the confusion of polemic rage; how light the sophistries which sway the tide of success when the hosts of party wrestle in the fight; how foolish the sounds which seem to award possession of that great capitol of opinion which overlooks the empire of the world.

Though, however, narrow feelings and selfish desires, intruding on the province of the understanding, prevent its judgments from being just, it is not true that their simple absence constitutes the best state for speculative research. It is sometimes said, that, were it possible, the inquirer's mind should be absolutely emptied of every desire, and be exposed, in entire passiveness, to the action of evidence brought before its tribunal; that a being incapable of emotion, a mere machine for performing logical operations, would be the most efficient discoverer. But surely his impartiality, however perfect, would accomplish nothing without an impulse:

intensity of intellectual action is needed, as well as clearness of intellectual view. And this will be most certainly found, not in one who follows the light without deep love of it; not in one who simply finds it a personal convenience, and desires it for its use; not even in one who has simply a relish for mental occupations, and prolongs them from pure taste; but in him who traverses the realm of thought, as if "seeking the will of One that sent him;" who reverently looks on the features of truth as on the face of God, and listens to its accents as to his whispered oracle; who trusts it with a "love that casteth out fear," and feels on him the blessed light of Heaven, when bigots pronounce him in a dreadful gloom.

*On questions of practical morals*, yet more emphatically than on subjects of speculative research, is it true that pure sympathies produce a clear intellect, and that *his* judgments are most likely to be just, who most habitually seeks the will of the eternal Father. The moral habits and tastes of men form their opinions, much more frequently than their opinions form their habits:—so that often their theoretical sentiments are little more than a systematic self-defence after the act, and afford an approximate index to the character of themselves and the society in which they live. The positions they assume having been taken up first, the reasons for maintaining them are discovered afterwards: and it is surprising to observe the confidence with which questions of morals are discussed, as if on grounds of absolute philosophy, when every quiet observer perceives that the alleged premises would appear ridiculous ex-

cept to persons already possessed of the conclusion. There is a test,—imperfect I admit,—by which to judge whether this is so or not, and to disenchant the imagination of the mere effect of usage. Any moral practice which admits of genuine defence, and has a permanent foundation in nature as well as in custom, might surely be recommended to an intelligent community hitherto ignorant of it, and successfully urged upon their deliberate adoption. Yet how many things are we accustomed to palliate or uphold, which we should be ashamed to submit to this criterion, and which the very act of expounding to child or stranger would sufficiently condemn ! In how many societies are the misnamed laws of honour, for example, still justified, as if they satisfactorily met the conditions of a problem else insoluble ! But if they be so sound and useful, it would be safe to try the argument in their behalf on those to whom the whole system of ideas is entirely new ; to preach the admirable wisdom of the duel to some tribe having only such civilization as may be attained without it ; and proselytize to it as if it were an *à priori* invention of philosophy. If the apostles of the world's law feel that in a mental clime so new, they would plead in vain, should they not suspect that they may be talking absurdities at home, which have no force but in the social prepossessions in their behalf ? It is fearful to reflect indeed to what an extent our native moral sentiments are modified by the atmosphere of social influence perpetually spread around us ; how the indications of the unperverted conscience may become obscured and lost ; and a fatal blindness and sleep disqualify it for its



waking office. It is the natural mistake of just minds to believe it vigilant and incorruptible as God. When we fix our gaze on some dread crime ; when we see, it may be, the outrages of a tyrant's profligacy and vengeance, crushing the life of resolute purity, or consigning to the dungeon the virtue which it fears ;—under the impulse of poetic justice, we imagine the perpetrator secretly agonized by the consciousness of guilt ; writhing at midnight beneath the lash of a fiery remorse, while his chained victim sleeps the light slumbers of innocence, and wakes with a brow cooled by the peace within. But we impose upon ourselves by a natural illusion : we conceive a wretch to judge himself by a good man's conscience, and to view his own deeds in a light which, had it been accessible to him, must at least have induced a hesitation about their commission. No, remorse is the attribute, not of the simply guilty, but of the *fallen* : it is the bitter memory which sin, yet fresh, retains of departed goodness ; the mind's convulsive grasp on the retreating purities of the past : and, however vehemently it protests against moral *deterioration*, the consolidated guilt of habit it lets alone. Shall any one then assure himself that all is right, because he is clear of compunction ? Shall he suffer his indulgent years to ebb idly away, because they are placid as the summer wave ? Shall he thrust aside the pleadings of those who would kindle in him higher thoughts and brace him to nobler deeds,—by saying that he is comfortable and does not need them ? If so, he satisfies himself by the same argument which sophists use in defence of slavery ;—the creatures are easy, have been

seen to laugh merrily by day, and are known to sleep well at night ! As if it were the whole life of man to have a sleek skin, and a drowsy brain ! As if any existence upon ideas were not better than any without them ; and to perceive one's misery were not the best consolation for its infliction ; and to aspire to a nobler existence, though with faintest hope, to chafe against the chain that binds us, though it gnaws our flesh, were not preferable to that most abject condition of humanity in which conscious degradation becomes impossible. We should beware then how we rely on this unconsciousness as a security. Of every low state of character, this apathy towards all that is above it, is the worst symptom. This torpor should not lull, but rather terrify. When this motionless repose reigns within,—this breathless atmosphere of the heart,—the freshness of health is no longer there : it is the pestilent dreariness of the waste ; the awful silence of moral death.

In its judgment of *human character*, more even than in matters of personal morals, a mind under the governance of pure and disinterested affections will evince the clearest insight. He would be the most impartial spectator of the great theatre of human life, who should be raised into a sphere of pure contemplation above its scenes ; to a position external to its competitions, its disappointments, its rewards ; where the voice of its restless multitudes floated but in whispers, articulate enough to report its passions with precision, but not thrilling enough to agitate the spirit by their power. Such an observer, acted on himself by no sympathies, but those of conscience,—perfectly perceptive, but en-

tirely passionless,—would behold us in true relations and proportions. The pure affections create a mental position somewhat similar to this. They still the confusion of the senses. They remove all motive for not seeing men and life exactly as they are. One who looks on the world as his appointed post of strenuous duty, and feels on him the divine charge to leave it better than he found it, must close neither eye nor heart against any of its ills. And as for its good,—for the charities that bless, the virtues that ennoble, the genius that illuminates our human lot,—delighting in them all, he discerns them all: bringing to him as they do the refreshment of a generous veneration, what temptation has he to doubt, decry, and disbelieve them? In a mind where any selfish end habitually prevails, men are regarded as tools: their services are wanted, and their complacency must be secured; they are looked upon as objects of management, on whom the arts of influence must be tried. Hence the mental eye is insensibly trained to a sly and circumventing gaze upon our fellows: the hand of cautious power steals forth, and makes a lever of their weaknesses: the tongue, encouraged by its first experiments of delicate insincerity, grows rash and voluble in flattery. And those whom a man is conscious of praising too much, he is sure to value too little. Accustomed to speak of good qualities which they do *not* possess, to invent merits of which they are empty, his mind is always dwelling on the negation of excellence, and growing familiar with it exclusively as an object of fiction: till at length he ceases to believe in its reality, and attributes to everything hu-

man the hollowness which he practises himself. By the interposition of his own selfishness, the nobler half of human nature undergoes total and permanent eclipse. How should it be otherwise? For who would spread the tender colours of the soul before an eye like his, where they can bask in no light of love? Who would lay the head to rest on a bosom cold as marble? Will any make confession of an unworldly aspiration to one, who keeps always ready some vile interpretation of whatever seems most excellent; who sees in the pious only traders in hypocrisy, in the patriot a speculator in power, in the martyr a candidate for praise? All that is beautiful shrinks from the presence of one who delights to soil it with instant dust. Oh, how unblest are they who have fallen into an incapacity to admire, and bid adieu to the solace of a deep reverence; who can take up without awe the leaves scattered on the earth by departed genius, or read of the struggles of liberty without enthusiasm, or follow the good in their pilgrimage of mercy, without the heavings of a mighty joy! No grief deserves such pity as the hopeless privations of a scornful heart.

Those who seek only their own, will lose, then, by natural process, the faculty of judging justly respecting human character. They are liable to fall into no less mistake in their anticipation of those *changes in society* which are brought about by the nobler forces of the human will. It is happy for the world, that over the vision of its greatest enemies their own selfishness spreads a film, concealing from them, as in judicial blindness, the generous powers which will effect their

overthrow. Tyrants and self-seeking rulers are, by nature, Machiavelian moralists : they have no faith but in the most vulgar incentives to action, and are familiar with no engines of influence but force and corruption. Accustomed to rely on these, they know not that there are emergencies, in which even a herd of slaves may be inspired with an enthusiasm that makes such implements of no avail ;—when high sentiments of social justice, or aspirations towards an invisible God, vibrate, through the dull clay of ordinary men. Thus, often has the pampered despot been blinded to his fate, and led unconscious on, like a decorated and sportive victim, to the sacrificial altar of a people's indignation. In spite of all his vigilance, conspiracy, conducted by lean and praying patriots, has gone on unnoticed beneath his very eyes. While the sunshine smiles upon his palace, and glances from the swords of faithful troops, he despises the gathering clouds of a nation's frown : till suddenly the tempest bursts upon the hills, and the heavy tramp, as of the men of toil, thunders on the ground ; and, after a flash of vented wrath, the veterans and their leader lie low upon the field, and the thanksgiving of the free goes up unto a sky serene. Thus it is of the very nature of guilty power to be surprised by the apparition of high-minded virtue in a people. And though the resistance it offers to the demands of conscience may, on this very account, be the more exasperated, and the vindication of an abstract right, like that of free worship, may cost a country the life of her best sons, we may yet be permitted to rejoice at the infatuation of selfish rule : for even the

sanguinary triumph of a great and righteous principle is often better than the sly and bloodless ascendancy of a bad one. War, with all its horrors, may be half forgotten in two generations: but the rights which it may establish may give the causes of perennial peace. Men, at the best, must die as the grass; but the principles of justice are blessings for evermore.

The selfish, then, in perpetually seeking their own will, and contemplating mankind chiefly as possible instruments for its accomplishment, necessarily overlook the best elements of our nature, and form judgments that are not just of human character, and its collective effects on the condition of the world. Moreover, while selfishness makes some men tools, it finds in others rivals; and, under the form of jealousy, draws another cloud over the judgment, and hides from it all that is fairest in kindred minds. He that cannot enjoy, with genuine exultation, the reputation of another and admire with tranquil spirit the excellence that borders on his own, loses the best joy of a good heart. To the very merits which, from being most akin to his own, he is most fitted to appreciate, he becomes insensible: and a bitter poison drops into the fountains of his most generous peace. There is no more melancholy sight, than that of a mind, otherwise great, succumbing beneath a mean and fretful passion like this; indulging in petty cavils at worth, before which he should lead on the multitude to bend the knee; so visibly greedy of others' praise, that the most vulgar observer laughs to think that the great man is just like himself. It was a grief, like an absolute bereavement, to find that our

own Newton, who should have lifted a brow as pure and smooth as the heavens he interpreted, and have greeted all that was good beneath them with a smile of godlike benediction, could tease a brother labourer, like Flamstead, and shrivel up his temper into peevishness, and be driven hither and thither by trivial suspicions, like a blind giant led about by a little child. Let us hope, what indeed there is some reason to believe, that all this was rather tremulousness of shattered nerves, than the perturbations of the native mind. Yet is it sad to have even to make excuse for such as he.

Our judgments of human character and relations will not be right, unless our sympathies be not disinterested only but pure. The moral feelings must transcend the social; the sense of duty be stronger than the instincts of affection. In addition to the negative qualification of *not* seeking our own will, we must have the positive one of seeking the will of the Father who is in heaven. The partialities of the affections are nobler every way than those of self-love: but they are partialities still; and while they make our judgments merciful, may prevent their being just. They may bewilder our moral perceptions, and in pure tenderness for the guilty, seduce us to think lightly of the guilt. There are in life few temptations so severe as those which our human love may thus offer to our conscience. If, for example, children around a mother's knee betray their first unanswerable suspicion of their father's vices, and urge her with wondering questions which she has so long dreaded to hear, that press hard upon his guilt; what is she to do? Is she to hide the anguish that

trembles on her features, and, in fidelity to him, be, for the first time, untrue to them? Is she to say the evil thing of him for whom she lives, and make him as a bye-word and a warning on his children's lips? And yet, is she to take it on herself to soil the purity and simplicity of their moral perceptions, and blow, with the foul breath of falsehood, on the lamp of God within their hearts? Her first duty is, doubtless, to the sanctities of their young minds: but so hard a lot forces us to think, how dreadful is the guilt that makes a contradiction between the sympathies of virtue and of home, and turns into a sin the natural mercy of disinterested love. —

Whatever then be the office required of the judgment; whether to seek truth along difficult ways, or, amid the sophistries of custom, to interpret our own responsibilities; whether it is invited to the generous appreciation of excellence, or summoned to the stern duties of disapprobation and rebuke; *he* only who can abandon his own will, and seek that of the Father in heaven, will either discern his position clearly, or discharge its obligations with simplicity and courage. Nor will this clearness of view and directness of aim be likely to desert him in the greater emergencies of life. Then it is that meaner principles of action, all mere personal desires, collapse in weakness and bewilderment. In times of danger, where it is needful to risk something or lose everything, men, possessed of no higher inspiration, lose their presence of mind: and while they stand in timid calculation, the one only moment of faithful duty slips away. They will profess



perhaps to have been overpowered by the sense of their responsibility ;—an unconscious acknowledgment of the confusion into which all self-regarding feelings throw the mind ; for no man, truly earnest about an object, critically pauses or turns aside to examine how he is acquitting himself. No ! great as are the achievements of inferior principles of action,—the love of power, the pursuit of glory,—the only heroism, fitted for the last extremity of circumstance, is that of disinterested Duty. Others may skilfully and firmly use up their outward resources to the last : but the Christian hero, when all these are gone, has yet to spend *himself*.

## VIII.

**"HELP THOU MINE UNBELIEF."**

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**MARK IX. 24.**

**LORD, I BELIEVE; HELP THOU MINE UNBELIEF.**

THAT this is an age most sensitive as to its belief, is evident on the slightest inspection of its moral physiognomy. A profound curiosity is awakened respecting the foundations of faith, and the proper treatment of those high problems which religion undertakes to solve. An unexampled proportion of our new literature is theological; of our new buildings, ecclesiastical; of our current conversation, on the condition and prospects of sects. The social movements which are watched with the most anxiety on the one hand, and hope on the other, are recent organizations of religious sympathy and opinion. Even the interests of industry and commerce find, for the moment, rival attractions to dispute their omnipotence; and the church is almost a balance for the exchange. A converted clergyman is as interesting as an apostate statesman; a visit to Rome, as a mission to Washington; a heresy from Germany, as a protocol from Paris; and a new baptism is no less the theme of talk than a new tariff. If theological gossip

were the measure of religious faith, we should be the devoutest of all human generations.

Yet with all this currency of holy *words*, rarely I believe has there been a scantier exchange of holy *thought*. We do not meet, eye to eye, and heart to heart, and say, with bosomed breath, "Lo, God is here!" But, rather, with quick observant glance, and loud harsh voice, we notice the posture of others, and discuss the things they say; and go round like a patrol to look in upon the world at prayers. The talk is all *critical*, about the length or shortness of some one's creed, the warmth or coldness of a people's worship. It tells you what each church thinks of all its neighbours, and repeats to you the image of Christendom in every phase. But flitting from image to image, we nowhere light upon the reality. We stand in one another's presence, like so many mirrors ranged round empty space: turning to each, you see only a distorted grouping of all the rest; which being gone, it would be evident at once, that that polished face could show merely vacancy without a trace of God. Of old, when lived the saints and prophets whose names we take in vain, the language of religion was itself the very incense that rose from burning, fragrant souls to heaven: now, it does but analyze the smoke, and explain of what chemistry it comes. Christ "came to bring fire upon earth," and his disciples, after eighteen centuries, are discussing the best patent match to get it kindled!

There is one feature in the professions of the present times, as compared with past, on which it is impossible to reflect without astonishment. There is everywhere

the sharpest discernment of unbelief in others, with an entire freedom from it in one's self. The critic, if you will only go round with him, can show you how it is lurking here and there. He keeps a list of all that his neighbors do *not* believe. Through the powerful glass of his suspicions he can make you aware of the nicest shades of heresy : and from writers who open new veins of thought, can pick out passages so dreadful as to constitute a kind of infidel anthology. From whatever class you choose your guide, this is what he will point out to you. Yet if you turn round and say, ' And now, good friend, what of thine own faith ? ' you will be delighted to find that it has altogether escaped the universal malady : it has never had a shake ; or, if ever ailing, has long got up its good looks, and remains quite sound and firm. Trust, in short, the churches' report of one another, and godlessness is universal ; trust their account of themselves, and scepticism is extinct. Nobody hesitates about anything which it is respectable to hold : and the clearest atmosphere of certainty overarches every life, and opens a heaven undarkened by a doubt. And who are these men, before whom the universe is so transparent ; for whom the veil of mystery is all withdrawn, or at least hides no awful possibilities ? who are always ready to say, " Lord, I believe ! " but would look askance at the brother who should meekly respond, " Help thou mine unbelief ! " — Smooth, easy men, with broad acres in the country, or heavy tonnage on the sea ; with good standing in their profession, or good custom at their shop ; living a life so rounded with comfort, and showing a mind so content

to repose on it, that, while rents and freights keep up, you cannot fancy they would much feel the loss of God : and to part with the reversion of heaven would hardly affect them like the news of a large bad debt. They believe soundly, in the same way that they dress neatly ; it no more occurs to them to question their habitual creed, than to think in the morning whether they shall put on a toga or a coat : it is a matter of course, that the proprieties be observed, and things that are settled for us be left untouched. Besides, what could be done with the ' common people,' if it were not for God ?

Now from this easy faith, sitting so light upon our modern men, I turn to the old Puritan, and am startled by the contrast. However much you may dislike his uncouth looks, and be offended with his whining voice, *he* is not a man without religion ;—a pity, it may be, that he has taken the holiness and left the beauty of it. Missing it however in his person and in his speech, you find it penetrating his life, and shaping it to high ends of truth and right. He can act and suffer for God's sake ; can stand loose from the delusions of property,—say that nothing is his own,—and occupy his place as a fiduciary fief from the Lord Paramount of all ; can despise gaudy iniquity and see to the heart of every gilded flattery ;—can insist on veracity in the council, and simplicity in the church ;—feel the Omniscient eye on his state paper as he writes ; and the Eternal Spirit directing the course his persecuted step shall take. Yet look into this man's diary, and stand by and overhear his prayers. He loudly bewails his *unbelief* ;—confesses a heart chilled with the very shadow of death ;—com-

plains that the Most High has hid his face from him ; and with tears and protestations calls on the spirit of Christ to exorcise the demons of doubt that are grappling with his soul. Surely this is a strange thing. Here is a man plainly living for sublime ends, beyond the baubles of this world : a man, who has got fear and pain beneath his feet ;—who welcomes self-denial, as an angel of the way, and watches every indulgence as a traitor offering the kiss ;—to whom the purest human love appears a snare tempting him to linger here ;—who walks the earth, as in the outer fringe of the beatific vision : and his cry is, “ Help thou mine unbelief ! ” And here are we, strangers to wrestlings such as his ; who sleep soundly by nights, and manage prosperously by day ; whose grand care is to get a living, rather than to live, and to cure by rule the health impaired by luxury :—we, to whom the earth answers well enough as a kitchen, a parlour, an office, or a theatre, but hardly as a watch-tower of contemplation, or a holy of holies for the oracles of God :—we can stand up, and have the assurance to say, “ Lord ! we believe ! ”

The difference between these two states of mind does not require that we should charge either of them with hypocrisy. There is truth in the professions of them both ; truth enough to vindicate their veracity, though not to equalize their worth. The unbeliever in the one case and the believer in the other, are measured off from a different scale ; our fathers looking up to the faith they ought to gain, their children looking down to the faith they have yet to lose. The former had so lofty a standard, that every thought beneath the summit-

level was reckoned to their shame: the latter have so low a standard, that all above the dead level at the base of life is counted to their praise. Nor is this at all inconceivable, even though we were to reduce all religion to a single article of faith. To me I confess, it seems a very considerable thing, just to believe in God ;—difficult indeed to avoid honestly, but not easy to accomplish worthily, and impossible to compass perfectly :—a thing not lightly to be professed, but rather humbly to be sought ; not to be found at the end of any syllogism, but in the inmost fountains of purity and affection ;—not the sudden gift of intellect, but to be earned by a loving and brave life. It is indeed the greatest thing allowed to mankind,—the germ of every lesser greatness : and he who can say, “ I have faith in the Almighty,” makes a higher boast than if he could declare, “ the Mediterranean is my garden, and mine is every branch that waves upon its shores, from the cedars of Lebanon to the pine upon the Alps.” How often, in the stifling heat and press of life, when trivial cares rise with dry and dusty cloud to shut us in, do we wholly lose our place in the great calm of God, and fret as if there were no Infinite Reason embracing the vortex of the world ! In loneliness and exhaustion, when the spirits are weak, and the crush of circumstance is strong ;—when comrades rest and sleep, and we must toil and watch ;—when the love of friends grows cold, and the warm light of youth is quenched, and the promises of years seem broken, and hope has but one chapter more ;—how little do we think, as the boughs drip sadly with all this night-rain, that we lodge in Eden still, where

the voice of the Lord God rustles in the trees, and bespeaks the blossom and the fruit that can only spring from tears ! Fear too, in every form except the fear of sin, is a genuine Atheism. The very child knows that : for if a terror comes on him because he is in the field alone by night, he chides himself for his false heart ; stops and looks tranquilly around ; relaxes the rigid limbs, and lets go the stifled breath ; putting forth a thought into the Great Presence, and drawing a holy quiet from the stars. And through all manhood's fears, no one loses his presence of mind, who has not lost the presence of his God. In the battle-field, where Justice sometimes makes appeal to the Lord of Hosts : in the shipwreck, where death seizes the storm as his trumpet, and with the lightning as his banner, comes streaming down the sky : in courts of sacerdotal Inquisition, where the branding-iron is hot, and instruments of torture tempt the lie : in the careless world, where prosperity is worshipped, and nice scruples are laughed down : in the sleepy church, which can wink at oppression, and give comfort to unrighteous Mammon, and cover with obloquy the heroes of God's truth :—no man could sink into an unworthy thing, did he keep within his everlasting fortress, instead of rushing unsheltered into the wild.

There is then every gradation even of this simple faith, spreading over a range quite indefinite. Only by a reference to its two extremes can we describe the position of each mind and of each age. *Complete belief* is attained, when God is realized as much in the present as in the past. *Complete unbelief*, when God is



excluded from the past as much as from the present. Measuring from this lowest limit, we are certainly in a state of *imperfect Atheism*. We do not negative as yet the sanctities of old : we only deny the inspirations of to-day. We receive certain ages of the by-gone world, as the real centres of Divine activity,—the sole witnesses of creation and of miracle, the happy points where Heaven vouchsafed to commune with earth. They lie in our imagination, like brilliant islands rising distant in the seas of Time ; vainly dashed by the dark waters of human history ; and lighted by a glory-column from above, piercing the leaden heavens that elsewhere overhang the waste. There, in old Palestine, we think, the august voice broke for a moment its eternal silence. There, upon the mountains, was a murmur more than of the wind ; and in the air a thunder grown articulate ; and on the grass a dew of fresher beauty ; and in the lakes a docile listening look, as if conscious of a Presence higher than the night's. In this retrospect, it will not be denied, lies the ground of our prevalent religion : it contains the strength of our case : our assurance of divine things refers pre-eminently thither, and scarcely at all to any more recent age. 'The men in those days' (we virtually say) 'had the best reasons for believing and recognizing God. Had we too been there, we should have known for ourselves, and have shared the great fear and faith that fell on all. But as we are placed afar off and have the sacredness at second hand, we must take their reasons upon trust, having none that are worth much of our own.' Our faith, therefore, is not personal, but testimonial : it is an hypothesis, a tra-

dition. It thinks within itself, 'If we had stood where Moses was, and travelled at the right hand of Paul, we should have felt as they.' And this justification of their ancient state of mind makes the substance of our belief to-day. And with like view do we turn our gaze upon the *future*. That also spreads before us radiant with a light divine. There we shall find better reasons for our faith than meet us here ; an audience-hall of the Most High where his spirit may be felt ; a clear touch of his living presence, glowing through our thought with conscious truth, and spreading through our hearts a saintly love, denied us in this court of exile. And so it happens, that ages gone, and ages coming, absorb from us the whole reality of God, and leave the life on which we stand an atheistic death. The heaven that spans us touches the earth on the right hand and the left, at an horizon we cannot reach, but keeps its infinite zenith-distance over head. We believe in One who looks at us, but not in One who lives with us. We are in the house he built ; but we work in it alone, for he has gone up among the hills, and will only come to fetch us by-and-bye. And it is no wonder, that in a banishment like this, our worship loses its immediate reality, and prays no more with a strong heart. It is not bathed in the flowing tides of Deity, but keeps dry upon the strand from which he has ebbed away. If ever it says, "Lo ! God is here !" it instantly belies itself, by drawing out the telescope of history to look for him. It is not a communion face to face, wherein he is near to us as the light upon our eye or the sorrow on our hearts. It has become a *Commemoration*, telling what once he was

to happier spirits of our race, and how grateful we are for the dear old messages that faintly reach our ear, how we will cherish the last remnant of that precious and only sure memorial,—the fragile and consecrated link between his sphere and ours. Thus our worship is a monument of absent realities, and serves at best but to keep alive, like an anniversary, the remembrance of things else fading in the distance. Or else, if we direct our face the other way, and look towards the future, we throw our prayers still further from the actual duties at our feet. We plainly say that there can be no true worship here,—it is too poor and dull a state:—we only expect it hereafter, and would bear that greater prospect in our mind. And so we fall into the insincerity, of coming before God by way of keeping ourselves in practice, and turning our religion into a *Rehearsal*. What wonder that, amid these histrionic affectations, the healthy heart of faith gets sicklier till it dies.

To approach again to the theocratic faith of our fathers, we must leave the atmosphere of sacredness upon the past and the future; only spread its margin either way, till it envelops and glorifies the present. For my own part, I venerate not less than others the birth-hour of Christianity, and the creative origin of worlds. But I do not believe that God lived then and there alone; or that if we could be transplanted to those times, we should find any such difference as would melt down the coldness of our hearts, or leave us more without excuse than we are now. There is no chronology in the evidence, any more than in the presence, of Deity. Since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were

from the beginning,—or rather the *un*beginning,—of creation. The universe, open to the eye to-day, looks as it did a thousand years ago : and the morning hymn of Milton does but tell the beauty with which our own familiar sun dressed the earliest fields and gardens of the world. We see what all our fathers saw. And if we cannot find God in your house and mine, upon the roadside or the margin of the sea ; in the bursting seed or opening flower ; in the day-duty and the night-musing ; in the genial laugh, and the secret grief ; in the procession of life, ever entering afresh, and solemnly passing by and dropping off ; I do not think we should discern him any more on the grass of Eden, or beneath the moonlight of Gethsemane. Depend upon it, it is not the want of greater miracles, but of the soul to perceive such as are allowed us still, that makes us push all the sanctities into the far spaces we cannot reach. The devout feel that wherever God's hand is, *there* is miracle : and it is simply an indevoutness which imagines that only where miracle is, can there be the real hand of God. The customs of heaven ought surely to be more sacred in our eyes than its anomalies ; the dear old ways, of which the Most High is never tired, than the strange things which he does not love well enough ever to repeat. And he who will but discern, beneath the sun, as he rises any morning, the supporting finger of the Almighty, may recover the sweet and reverent surprise with which Adam gazed on the first dawn in Paradise. It is no outward change, no shifting in time or place ; but only the loving meditation of

the pure in heart, that can re-awaken the Eternal from the sleep within our souls : that can render him a reality again, and re-assert for him once more his ancient Name of "THE LIVING GOD."

## IX.

### HAVING, DOING, AND BEING.

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1 JOHN II. 17.

THE WORLD PASSETH AWAY AND THE LUST THEREOF: BUT HE THAT  
DOETH THE WILL OF GOD ABIDETH FOR EVER.

FEW things can strike a thoughtful man with greater wonder, than the different estimate he makes, in different moods, of the same portion of time. To-day, he is engaged with some speculation, in which a millenium is not worth reckoning: to-morrow, he is brought to some experience, in which a minute bears the burden of an eternal weight. With the geologist we may go out beyond the limits of human events, and grow familiar with those vast periods during which the earth's crust was deposited in the oceans, or smelted in the furnaces, or upheaved from the gas-caverns, of nature: and accustomed to call the Alps and Andes recent elevations, and to treat all living species as only the newest fashion of creative skill, we may well feel as though the hasty sands of our particular generation were lost, and God could have no index small enough to count our individual life. With the astronomer, we may take a station external to this earth itself, recede to an era when possibly the solar system was but one of crea-

tion's morning mists, and trace its history as it first spun itself into orbital rings, and then rolled itself up into planetary globes: and with an imagination occupied by cycles so capacious, for which the old granite pillars of the world can scarce, with utmost stretch of age, afford a unit-measure, it is not strange if we deem ourselves trivial as the insect, and transient as the flake of summer snow. Whoever approaches the human lot from this side of thought, descending upon it from the *maxima*, instead of ascending from the *minima*, of calculable things, will be apt to think it a poor affair, and to regard it as a dream really compressed into a moment, but with a delusive consciousness of years. Seeing at night how calm and silent are the stars far greater than ours, sending down the same cold sharp light as they did on the first traveller lost upon the mountains or sinking in the sea, he may naturally look with a smile or a sigh at the ferment of human passion and pursuit, and gaze on it as on the dust-cloud of a distant army marching to immediate death. 'What,' he might say, 'are the achievements of your mightiest force, and the last triumphs of your boasted civilization? What do you effect by the vaunted efforts of your locomotive skill? Only certain glidings, which, a short way off, are but invisible changes of place on the surface of a bead. And what is the end of all your successive systems of health and disease?—what the utmost hope of the skill of all physicians, and the cries and prayers from the whole infirmary of human ills? Only this—that a little respite may be given, till the rising pendulum shall have reached its fall. Nay, what is the aim even

of your nobler institutions, devoted to the mind? On what do your ancient schools and universities, with generation after generation of students, spend themselves amid the murmurs of polite applause? On the attempt to recover a few snatches from the sayings and doings of spirits that, like yourselves, had to vanish at cock-crowing. And all the while as you pant and strive and hope, the great immoveable God is with you close at hand, and could tell you all by a whisper, if he would !'

It is quite possible, in this way, by bringing the human career into comparison with the stupendous cycles that lie around it, to dwarf its magnitude, and throw contempt upon its purposes. The prevailing tendency, however, is all in the opposite direction. The thoughts which *science* presents may operate as a telescope to show us what else there is beside ourselves, and persuade us that we are but as the trembling leaf in the boundless forests of existence. But those which are offered by *affection* and natural experience are rather apt to interpose a microscopic medium ; and instead of diminishing by comparison the whole of life, to magnify every part by concentration. If that life, as you affirm, be but a short visit to this sphere, it is yet our only visit ; and the moments of our stay acquire an intenser worth. If it has just begun, and is also on the verge of close, then we must revere it doubly, as a fresh thing, and as a thing about to perish : two sanctities comprise it all, — a first day and a last ; and there is no time for custom to dull the space between the welcome and the adieu. Nor, after all, is any conscious life proper to



be compared with the huge periods of the inanimate world. Their giant strides may roughly step from century to century, and have *less in them* than its quivering undulations over the smallest surface of time. The two things are absolutely incommensurable; and there is no chronometer that can reckon both. In moments of deep sorrow, or high faith; when we either fear the last extremity, or hope for the dawn of new deliverance; when we are sinking to the point of lowest depression, struggling on the wing of highest resolution; in startling agonies of duty that goad our jaded strength; in helpless vigils, when we must sit with folded hands and wait; in all crises of duty, of misery, of joy, of aspiration;—how little can the beat of any clock count the elements of our existence then! The moments are stretched into an awful fulness; and while the midnight star strikes the meridian wire, we pass through more than common years. Hence it is, that no familiarity with physical periods can induce us to think lightly of the contents of life. If God, affluent in eternities, is lavish of time upon his universe, he is economic of it with us: filling it with unutterable experiences, and charging it with irrevocable opportunities. With so small an allowance of it here, every part of it may well appear a priceless treasure. And though too often we grow careless of the portion which we have, we complain if there is any that we seem to lose. We throw away whole handfuls of time in heedless waste, and suffer no compunction: but if God, with heavenly Will, take from us any expected hours, we *burst* into faithless tears. The term assured to us, we

think, has been cut short ; and the promised value cruelly withheld.

The truth is, that neither of these views,—that which looks with philosophic slight on the whole of mortal life, and that which clings with human fondness to every part, especially if it be denied,—can stand the light of devout and Christian thought. On the one hand, *that* cannot be insignificant which God has deemed it worth while to call out of Eternity, and to set upon a theatre like this, fresh with duty ever new, and old with memories ever sacred ; rich as Paradise with wonder and beauty, only covered now through sorrow with a conscious heaven. And that which God himself has brought hither to look for, awhile through real living eyes of thought and love, transparent to the answering gaze, can scarce, if we reflect on the difference between its presence and its absence, be of less than infinite value. Yet, on the other hand, it were wrong to measure its worth to us by the mere duration of its stay. It would be a far inferior treasure, were it calculable thus : and we can say nothing so depreciatory of a human life, as that we have lost half its value, because it was not twice as long. If this be so, the function it performs for us must be of the lowest order ; not to our love, and faith, and aspiration, which, once awakened, can be doubled by no addition and consumed by no subtraction of moments ; but to our pleasure or our gains, to which alone this arithmetic of quantity can be applied. To treat a life as incomplete, is to say that its proper end is unfulfilled ; is to assume that a certain amount of time was needful to realize that end ;

and that, for want of such an amount, the existence granted becomes an aimless fragment. Some lives do, no doubt, present so poor an aspect, that only by an effort of strong faith can we refrain from thinking thus : but else, it is of the mere meanness and penury of our own spirits, that we lapse into so unworthy a complaint. If we look for a few moments into the different ends to which men live, we shall soon see, *which* of them are measurable by quantity, and proportioned to the time spent in their attainment.

Some men are eminent for what they *possess* : some, for what they *achieve* ; others, for what they *are*. *Having, Doing, and Being*, constitute the three great distinctions of mankind, and the three great functions of their life. And though they are necessarily all blended, more or less, in each individual, it is seldom difficult to say, which of them is prominent in the impression left upon us by our fellow man.

In every society, and especially in a country like our own, there are those who derive their chief characteristic from what they *have* : who are always spoken of in terms of revenue ; and of whom you would not be likely to think much, but for the large account that stands on the world's ledger in their name. In themselves, detached from their favourite sphere, you would notice nothing wise or winning. At home, possibly, a dry and withered heart ; among associates a selfish and mistrustful talk ; in the council, a style of low ignoble sentiment ; at church, a formal, perhaps an irreverent, dulness ; betray a barren nature, and offer you only points of repulsion, so far as the humanities are con-

cerned : and you are amazed to think that you are looking on the idols of the exchange. Their greatness comes out in the affairs of bargain and sale, to which their faculties seem fairly apprenticed for life. If they speak of the past, it is in memory of its losses and its gains : if of the future, it is to anticipate its incomings and investments. The whole chronology of their life is divided according to the stages of their fortunes, and the progress of their dignities. Their children are interesting to them principally as their heirs : and the making of their will fulfils their main conception of being ready for their death. And so completely do they paint the grand idea of their life on the imagination of all who know them, that when they die, the Mammon-image cannot be removed, and it is the fate of the money, not of the man, of which we are most apt to think. Having put vast prizes in the funds, but only unprofitable blanks in the admiration and the hearts of us, they leave behind nothing but their *property* ; or, as it is expressively termed their "*effects*,"—the thing which they caused, the main result of their having been alive. How plain is it that we regard them merely as *instruments of acquisition* ; centres of attraction for the drifting of capital ; that they are important only as indications of commodities ; and that their human personality hangs as a mere label upon a mass of treasure ! Every one must have met with a few instances in which this character is realized, and with many in which, notwithstanding the relief of some redeeming and delightful features, it is at least approached. In proportion as this aim, of possession, is taken to be paramount in life,

length of days must no doubt be deemed indispensable to the human destination. The longer a man lies out at interest, the greater must be the accumulation. If he is unexpectedly recalled, every end which he suggested is disappointed: the only thing he seemed fit for cannot go on: he is a power lost from this sphere, an incapacity thrust upon the other; missed from the markets here, thrown away among sainted spirits there. For himself, and for both worlds, the event seems deplorable enough: and it is difficult to make anything but confusion out of it. An imagination tacitly filled with this conception of life, as a stage prepared for enjoyment and possession, must look on a term that is unfulfilled as on a broken tool, dropping in failure to the earth.

Of those who have thus lived to accumulate and enjoy, *History* is for the most part silent; having in truth nothing to say. Not doing the work, or joining in the worship of life, but only feasting at its table, they break up and drive off into oblivion as soon as the lights are out and the wine is spilt. Belonging entirely to the present, they never appear in the past; but sink with weight of wealth in the dark gulf:—unless perchance some Cræsus the Rich is fortunate enough to fall into association with Solon the Wise. There are no historical materials in simple animal existence, nor in the mere sentient being of a man, considered as the successful study of comfort, and receptacle of happiness. History is constructed by a second and nobler class,—those who prove themselves to be here, not that they may *have*, but that they may *do*; to whom life is a glorios

bour ; and who are seen not to work that they may rest, but only to rest that they may work. No sooner do they look around them, with the open eye of reason and faith, upon the great field of the world, than they perceive that it must be for them a battle-field : and they break up the tents of ease, and advance to the dangers of lonely enterprise and the conflict with splendid wrong. Strong in the persuasion that this is a God's world, and that his Will must rule it by royal right, they serve in the severe campaign of justice ; asking only for the wages of life, and scorning the prizes of spoil and praise. Wherever you find such, whether in the field, in the senate, or in private life, you see the genuine type of the heroic character,—the clear mind, the noble heart, indomitable will, pledged all to some arduous and unselfish task : and whether it be the achievement, with Cobden, of freedom of pacific commerce between land and land ; or, with Clarkson, of freedom of person between man and man ; or, with Cromwell, of freedom of worship between earth and heaven ; the essential feature is in all instances the same : the man holds himself as the mere instrument of some social work ; commits himself in full allegiance to it ; and spends himself wholly in it. They “ have a baptism to be baptized with ; and how are they straitened, till it be accomplished ! ” During the glorious conflict of such lives it is impossible not to look on with breathless interest. Once possessed of their great design, we watch its development with eager eye and beating heart. And if, early in the day, they are struck down, we clasp our hand in sudden anguish, and a cry.

goes up that the field is lost. And though this despair is a momentary loss of the true faith; though God never fails to rally the forces of every good cause that has mustered for battle on his earth; yet, no doubt, the victory in such case is deferred: the plan is broken off: the painful sense of a suspended work, that might have been finished, remains upon survivors' hearts. On behalf of the noble actors themselves, indeed, we have no embarrassment of faith: there is that within them which may well find a home in more worlds than one, and meet a welcome wherever Almighty Justice reigns. We are not ashamed, as with the man of mere possession, to follow them into the higher transitions of their being, and knock for them at the gate of better spheres. But there appears something untimely and deplorable in the providence of the world they quit. The fruit has not been permitted to ripen ere it dropped. The great function of their life required time for its fulfilment; and time has been denied. Their beneficent action was wholly through the energies of their living will: and these energies are laid for us in unseasonable sleep. And thus, while we are ashamed at the grave of the Epicurean, we weep over the departure of the hero.

But there is a life higher than either of these. The *saintly* is beyond the heroic mind. To get good, is animal: to do good, is human: to be good, is divine. The true use of a man's possessions is to help his work: and the best end of all his work, is to show us what he is. The noblest workers of our world bequeath us nothing so great as the image of themselves. Their *task*,

be it ever so glorious, is historical and transient: the majesty of their *spirit* is essential and eternal. When the external conditions which supplied the matter of their work have wholly decayed from the surface of the earth, and become absorbed in its substance, the perennial root of their life remains, bearing a blossom ever fair, and a foliage ever green. And while to some, God gives it to show themselves *through* their work, to others he assigns it to show themselves without even the opportunity of work. He sends them transparent into this world; and leaves us nothing to gather and infer. Goodness, beauty, truth, acquired by others, are original to them; hiding behind the eye, thinking on the brow, and making music in the voice. The angels appointed to guard the issues of the pure life seem rather to have taken their station at its fountains, and to pour into it a sanctity at first. Such beings live simply *to express themselves*: to stand between heaven and earth, and meditate for our dull hearts. With fewer outward objects than others, or at least with a less limited practical mission devoting them to a fixed task, their life is a soliloquy of love and aspiration; the soul not being, with them, the servant of action, but action rather the needful articulation of the soul. Not, of course, that they are, in the slightest degree, exempt from the stern and positive obligations of duty, or licensed, any more than others, to dream existence away. If once they fall into this snare, and cease to work, the lineaments of beauty and goodness are exchanged for those of shame and grief. Usually they do not *less*, but rather *more*, than others; only under



somewhat sorrowful conditions, having spirits prepared for what is more than human, and being obliged to move within limits that are only human. The worth of such a life depends little on its *quantity*: it is an affair of *quality* alone. These highest ends of existence have but slight relation to time. Years cannot mellow the love already ripe, or purify the perceptions already clear, or lift the aspiration that already enters heaven. It is with Christ-like minds, as it was with Christ himself. His divine work was not in the task that he did, but in the image which he left. You cannot say that there was any great business of existence, estimable by time, which he set himself to achieve; and which you can even imagine to be broken off by his departure. He lived enough to manifest the heavenly spirit and solemn dignity of life. At thirty years he passed away: and no one, I suppose, was ever heard to lament that he did not stay till sixty. He thought indeed, as the faithful must ever think, that there was a "work given him to do;" unaware that, by his very manner of devotion to it, it was already done. So eager was he worthily to finish it, that, of all his sorrows, to be cut short in it was the bitterest cup that might not pass from him except he drank of it; unconscious that the spirit and the conquest of that agony did actually bring it to the sublimest close. His life stood in different relations to himself and to the world. To himself it was a solemn trust; to the world, the truth and grace of God: to him, it was given as the subject of achievement; to the world, as the object of new faith and love. And so, the early cross, so dark

to him, becomes the holiest vision of our hearts. It broke nothing abruptly off for us ; and enabled him to leave a Presence upon the earth, sufficient to soothe the sorrows, inspire the conscience, and deepen the earnestness, of succeeding ages. And so is it with the least of his disciples, whose mind is truly tinged with the hues of the same heavenly spirit. The very child, of too transient stay, may paint on the darkness of our sorrow, so fair a vision of loving wonder, of reverent trust, of deep and thoughtful patience, that a divine presence abides with us forever, as the mild and constant light of faith and hope. What we had deemed a glory of the earth may prove but the image of a star upon a stream of life, effaceable by the first night-wind that sweeps over the waters. But that we have seen it, and looked into the pure depths given for its light, is enough to assure us that, though visionary below, it is a reality above, and has a place among the imperishable lustres of God's universe. Thus, with attributes of being that have little concern with time, the reckoning of moments is of less account. The transitory reflection points to an eternal beauty. And while human things are learned by the lessons of a slow experience, a momentary flash of blessing may give us what is most divine ; and like the lightning that strikes us blind, leave a glory on the soul, when our very sight is gone.

## X.

### THE FREE-MAN OF CHRIST.

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1 CORINTHIANS VII. 22.

HE THAT IS CALLED IN THE LORD, BEING A SERVANT, IS THE LORD'S FREE-MAN : LIKEWISE ALSO, HE THAT IS CALLED, BEING FREE, IS CHRIST'S SERVANT.

FREEDOM, in the most comprehensive sense of the word, can evidently belong to Omnipotence alone. To be exempt from all controlling force without, is the exclusive prerogative of a Being, within whose nature are folded all the active powers of the universe, and to whom there is no external Cause, but the acts projected from his own will. To be at rest from all conflict within, can be the lot of no mind, susceptible of progressive attainment in excellence : for moral growth is but a prolonged controversy in which conscience achieves victory after victory : and He only whose holiness is eternal, original, incapable of increase or decline, can have a mind absolutely serene and unclouded ; of power immense, but rapid and unreluctant as the lightning ; of designs, however majestic, bursting without appreciable transition from the conception to the reality. Descend to created natures ; and whatever force they comprise, is a force imprisoned and control-

led ; if by nothing else, at least by the laws of that body, which gives them a locality, and affords them the only tools wherewith to work their will. The life of beings that are born and ripen and die, or pass through any stages of transition, floats upon a current silent but irresistible. In other spheres there may possibly exist rational beings unconscious of the restraining force of God exercised upon them ; whose desires do not beat against their destiny ; whose powers of conceiving and of executing, whether absolutely small or great, are adjusted to perfect correspondence. And since we measure all things by our own ideas, he whose conception never overlaps his execution, can never detect the poorness of his achievements, how trivial soever they may be in the eye of a spectator. But man, at all events, palpably *feels* his limits ; receives a thousand checks, that remind him of the foreign agencies to which he is subject ; glides like a steersman in the night over waters neither boundless nor noiseless, but broken by the roar of the rapid, and dizzy with the dim shapes of rocky perils. Our whole existence, all its energy of virtue and of passion, is in truth, but the struggle of freewill against the chains that bind us :—happy he, that by implicit submission to the law of duty escapes the severity of every other ! Our nature is but a casket of impatient necessities ; urgencies of instinct, of affection, of reason, of faith ; the pressure of which against the inertia of the present determines the living movements, and sustains the permanent unrest, of life. To take the prescribed steps is difficult ; to decline them and stand still, impossible. We can no more preserve a

stationary attitude in the moral world, than we can refuse to accompany the physical earth in its rotation. The will may be reluctant to stir ; but it is speedily overtaken by provocatives that scorn the terms of ease, and take no heed of its expostulations. Driven by the recurring claims of the bodily nature, or drawn by the permanent objects of the spiritual, all men are impelled to effort by the energy of some want, that cannot have spontaneous satisfaction. The labourer that earns his bread by the sweat of his brow, is chased by the hindmost of all necessities,—animal hunger. The prophet and the saint, moved by the supreme of human aspirations,—the hunger and thirst after righteousness,—embrace a life of no less privation and of severer conflict. And between these extremes are other ends of various kinds,—renown for the ambitious, art for the perceptive, knowledge for the sage,—given to us to graduate and allow in fair proportion. All these are conscious powers, but all imply a conscious resistance. Each separately precipitates the will upon a thousand obstacles ; and all together demand the ceaseless vigilance of conscience to preserve their order, and prevent the encroachments of usurpation. Thus, all action implies the presence of some necessity. And if other and more liberal conditions are requisite to perfect freedom, then can no man be ever free.

Exemption then from the sense of want and the need of work is not that which constitutes freedom to the human being. Another form of expression is sometimes resorted to, in order to discriminate the free from the servile mind, and contrast the nobleness of the one with

the abjectness of the other. It is said that the freeman acts from within, on the suggestion of ideas ; while the slave is the creature of outward coercion, and obeys some kind of physical force. But this language still conceals from us the real distinction. Even the man whose person, as well as mind, is in a condition of slavery, is not necessarily, or usually, under any external and material constraint. Hour by hour, and day by day, he enjoys immunity from bodily compulsion ; and habitually lives at one remove from the application of direct sensation to his will. He too, like other men, is worked by an ideal influence,—a fear that haunts, an image that disturbs him. When the field-serf plies his spade with new energy at the approaching voice of the Steward, it is not that any muscular grasp seizes on his limbs and enforces a quicker movement ; but that a mental terror is awakened, and the phantom of the lash flies through his startled fancy. And, in higher cases of obedience, it is proportionally more evident, that the physical objects which are the implements of procuring submission fulfil their end by the mere power of suggestion. The eagle of the Roman legion, the cross in the battles of the crusades, reared its head above the hosts upon the field ; and wherever this instrument, made by the chisel and the saw, was moved about hither and thither, it drew to it the wave of fight, and swayed the living mass, content to be mowed down themselves, if it alone were saved. It was an emblem of things most powerful with their hearts ; and illustrates by another example, the truth, that the force which persuades the submissive will is, in all instances, from the highest to the lowest,

internal and ideal. The difference between the free and servile must be sought, not in the distinction between a physical and a mental impulse, but in the different order of ideas in which the action of the two has its source.

There are two governing ideas that, without material error, may be said to rule the actions of mankind, and share between them the dominion of all human souls; the idea of *pleasure and pain*; and the idea of the *noble and ignoble*. Every one, in every deed, follows either what he enjoys or what he reveres. Now he and he only is *free* who implicitly submits to that which he deeply venerates; who takes part, offensive and defensive, with the just and holy against the encroachments of evil; who feels his self-denials to be his privilege, not his loss; a victory that he has won, not a spoil that he has been obliged to forego. Such a one is free, because he is ruled by no power which he feels to be unrightful and usurping, but maintains in ascendancy the divine Spirit that has an eternal title to the monarchy of all souls; because he is never driven to do that which he knows to be beneath him; because he is conscious no longer of severe internal conflict, or it issues in secure enfranchisement; because self-contempt, and fear and restlessness, and all the feelings peculiar to a state of thralldom, are entirely unknown. And *they* all are slaves,—liable to the peculiar sins and miseries of the servile state,—to its meanness, its cowardice, its treachery;—who either have nothing which they revere, or, having it, insult its authority, and trample it under the Bacchanalian feet of pleasure. It is the worst and last

curse of actual personal slavery, that it extinguishes the notion of rights, and with it the sense of duties ; that it quenches the desire and conscious capacity for better things ; that degradation becomes impossible ; that blows may be inflicted, and the pain go no further than the flesh ; and that by feeding the eyes with the prospect of pleasure, or brandishing the threat of infliction, you may move the creature as you will. And whenever, by men at large, nothing is esteemed holy and excellent, and enjoyment or suffering are the only measures of good, the essence of the same debasement exists. The slave flies the idea of pain ; the voluptuary pursues the idea of pleasure : a menace or a bribe is the force that makes a tool of both ; and they must be referred to the same class. Nor does the analogy between them fail in cases of mixed character, and imperfect degradation. If the serf has not sunk to the level which it is the tendency of his condition to reach, if he has still his dreams of justice, his half-formed sense of human dignity, it is then his privilege to be wretched ; to feel an agonizing variance between his nature and his lot, and writhe as the iron entereth his soul. And a like miserable shame does every one suffer, who offers indignity to his own higher capacities ; who suppresses in silence and inaction the impulses of his devout affections, and is seduced or terrified into conscious vileness. It is not without sufficient reason that all those whose wills are of self-indulgence make, are charged with being enthralled. Their minds have the very stamp of slavery.

The essential root then of all dependence and servility of soul lies in this, that the mind loves pleasure



more than God. The essence of true spiritual liberty is in this ; that the mind has high objects which it loves better than its own indulgence : in the service of which hardship and death are honourable and welcome ; which must be subordinated to nothing ; which men are not simply to pursue in order to live ; but which they live in order to pursue. In acknowledging the pleasurable as supreme consists the real degradation and disloyalty of the one : in vowing undivided allegiance to what is worthy, true, and right, consists the power and freedom of the other.

Let the Christian beware, as he loves the birth-right of a child of God, how he takes up any other and more superficial idea of moral liberty than this. Especially let him not yield to the prevalent and growing feeling of these days, that there is something disgraceful in obedience altogether :—that it is an unmanly attitude of mind ; and that if occasions do occur in human life, when self-will must succumb, it is best to slur over so annoying a crisis, and at all events avoid the appearance of capitulation. The heart that secretly feels thus has never felt the contact of Christ's divine wisdom : the slightest touch of but the hem of his garment in the press and crowd of life, would have cured the burning of this inward fever. For, is not this insubordinate will fighting with its lot, instead of loving it,—trying bolts and bars against it, and standing hostile siege, instead of throwing open its gates, and with reverent hospitality entertaining it as an angel visitant ? Great and sacred is obedience, my friends : he who is not able, in the highest majesty of manhood, to obey, with clear and

open brow, a Law higher than himself, is barren of all faith and love; and tightens his chains, moreover, in struggling to be free. A child-like trust of heart, that can take a hand, and wondering walk in paths unknown and strange, is the prime requisite of all religion. Let the Great Shepherd lead; and by winding ways, not without green pastures and still waters, we shall climb insensibly, and reach the tops of the everlasting hills, where the winds are cool and the sight is glorious. But, in the noon of life, to leap and struggle against the adamantine precipice will only bruise our strength, and cover us with sultry dust. Among the thousand indications how far men have wandered from this temper, and poisoned their minds with the sophistries of self-will, this is enough: that there are some who, instead of self-abandonment to God, appear to think that they can put him and his truth under obligation to themselves, and that they confer a great favour in encouraging the public regard to his will and worship; who, having made up their minds that Christianity is useful in many ways, and of excellent service in managing the weaker portion of mankind, resolve to patronize it. Well;—it is an ancient arrogance, lasting as the vanities of the human heart. The Pharisee, it would appear, belongs to a sect never extinct: he lives immortal upon the earth; and in our day, like Simon of old, graciously condescends to ask the Lord Jesus to dine!

Nor is there any truth in the notion that it must be disgraceful to serve and obey the will of our fellow-men; of our equals; of those even who are weaker and not wiser than ourselves. It depends altogether on the feel-

ing that prompts the submission ; whether it be self-interest, or reverence. To be controlled by others against our idea of the pleasant, is by no means necessarily debasing : to be controlled by them against our idea of the right, is. The gross conception of liberty, which takes it to consist in *doing whatever we like*, tends only to a restless personal indulgence,—to a burning, insatiable thirst for selfish happiness, the importunity of which renders this fancied freedom bitter as the vilest slavery. Does any one doubt, whether subjection the most absolute can ever be noble ? Go into a home where a child lies sick,—one of a joyous family where often merry voices ring from morn to night. Silence, the unconscious forerunner of death, flits through the house, touching with her seal the lips even of the gayest prattler ; and when the faint cry of feverish waking frets forth from the pillow, how fleet the answer to the call ! how soft the mother's cheerful words from out the anguished heart ! how prompt the father's hand with the cup of cold water to cool the parched tongue. Every wayward wish, perhaps discarded soon as formed, swift messengers glide to and fro to gratify : every burst of impatience falls softly and without recoil on playmates never wounded so before. No despot was ever so obeyed, as this little child, whose will is for a while the sole domestic law : for despots acquire no such title to command. But this title recorded in God's handwriting of love on the tablets of our humanity, we must recognise and obey. The terms of it proclaim, in defiance of the pretensions of self-will, that the service of others is our divinest freedom ; and that the law which

rules us becomes the charter that disenthral us. Nay, to work patiently in faith and love, to do not what we like, but what we revere, confers not liberty only but power. He at least who, of all our race, was the most indubitably free, and the great emancipator too, had in him this attribute, that "he pleased not himself," and esteemed it his mission "not to be ministered unto, but to minister." And therefore did he obtain a name above every name, and put the world beneath his feet. Having claimed nothing, not even himself, it is given him to inherit all things. His power indeed over men was slow in gathering, and they that loved him in his mortal life, and lived and suffered for his sake, were few. Had he needed *then* a rescue and a retinue, he must have looked to the "legions of Angels," who alone were qualified for a reverence and fidelity so true. But *now* let him come; and would not the legions of our world throng forth to meet him; casting the will of pride beneath his feet, strewing his path with flowers of joy which he has caused to bloom, and flinging their glad Hosannas to the sky?

By the meekest ministrations did the Lord acquire his blessed sway. How different is the method usually resorted to in order to obtain the services of others! Instead of thinking, speaking, acting freely, and in the divine spirit of duty, and leaving it to God to append what influence and authority he may see fit, men begin by coveting the services of others, and resolving to have them; and, being sure that they can at least be purchased by money, they "make haste to get rich;" often hurrying over every species of mean compliance for this

purpose, in the wretched hope of earning their enfranchisement in the end. This process of making their moral liberty contingent upon the purse, is characteristically termed, "*gaining an independence.*" The very phrase is a satire upon the morals of the class that invented it, and the nation that adopts it. We then are a people, who express by the same word, the freedom of the mind, the high rule of conscience and conviction, and a thing of gold, that can be kept at a bank, or invested in the funds. With us, broad acres must go before bold deeds: one must possess an estate before he can be a man. And so, to "win an independence," many an aspirant becomes a sycophant: to "win an independence," he licks the feet of every disgrace that can add a shilling to his fortune: to "win an independence," he courts the men whom he despises, and stoops to the pretences that he hates: to "win an independence," he solemnly professes that which he secretly derides, and grows glib in uttering falsehoods that should scald his lips. Truly this modern idol is a God, who compels his votaries to crawl up the steps of his throne. And when the homage has been paid, and the prize is gained, how noble a creature must the worshipper issue forth, who, by such discipline, has achieved his "independence" at last!

This miserable Heathenism is simply reversed in the Christian method and estimate of liberty. The road to genuine spiritual freedom, taking, it may seem, a strange direction, lies through what the older moralists called "Self-annihilation." Renounce we our wishes, and the oppositions that bear against us inevitably vanish.

As force is made evident only by resistance, necessity is perceptible only by the pressure it offers to our claims and desires. He who resists not at all, feels no hostile power ; is chafed by no irritation ; mortified by no disappointment. He bends to the storm as it sweeps by, and lifts a head serene when it is gone. Nor is his liberty merely negative : self-will is displaced only to make way for God's will : and weakness is surrendered that Almightiness may be enthroned. The positive empire of the right takes the place of a feeble and contested sway. The efficacy of the change is sure to be seen in achievement no less than in endurance. Over him that shall undergo it, the world and men lose all their deterring power. Do what they may with their instruments of persecution and derision, none of these things move him. They cannot sting him into scorn. His ends lie far beyond their reach. Who can hinder him from following that which he reveres ; from embracing in his love the world that crushes him ; and remaining true to the God that tries him as by fire ? It is the Son that has made him free, and he is free indeed !

## XI.

### THE GOOD SOLDIER OF JESUS CHRIST.

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#### 2 TIMOTHY II. 3.

THOU THEREFORE ENDURE HARDNESS, AS A GOOD SOLDIER OF JESUS CHRIST.

THERE would seem to be an incurable variance between the life which men covet for themselves and that which they admire in others ; nay, between the lot which they would choose beforehand, and that in which they glory afterwards. In prospect, nothing appears so attractive as ease and licensed comfort ; in retrospect, nothing so delightful as toil and strenuous service. Half the actions of mankind are for the diminution of labour ; yet labour is the thing they most universally respect. We should think it the greatest gain to get rid of effort : yet if we could cancel from the past those memorable men in whom it reached its utmost intensity, and whose whole existence was a struggle, we should leave human nature without a lustre, and empty history of its glory. The aim which God assigns to us as our highest is indeed the direct reverse of that which we propose to ourselves. He would have us in perpetual conflict ;—we crave an unbroken peace. He keeps us ever on the

march ;—we pace the green sod by the way with many a sigh for rest. He throws us on a rugged universe ;—and our first care is to make it smooth. His resolve is to demand from us, without ceasing, a living power, a force fresh from the spirit he has given ; ours, to get into such settled ways, that life may almost go of itself, with scarce the trouble of winding up. So that **TIME**, administered by Him, is always breaking up the old : by us, is rivetting and confirming it. With him, it is the source of new growths and fresh combinations : which we proceed, as long as we can, to cut down and accommodate to the order which they interrupt. He employs it in rolling the forest into the river, and turning the stream from our abodes ; in burying our fields and villages beneath the shifting sand-hills, which we strive to bind with grassy roots ; in bringing back the marsh on our neglected lands, and setting us again the problem of pestilence and want. Every way he urges our reluctant will. He grows the thistle and the sedge : but expects us to raise the olive and the corn ; having given us a portion of strength and skill for such an end. He directs over the earth the shifting wave of human population, and brings about those new conditions from which spring the rivalries and heats of nations : and expects us to evolve peace and justice ; having inspired us with reason and affection for this end. He leaves in each man's lot a thicket of sharp temptations : and expects him, though with bleeding feet, to pass firmly through ; having given him courage, conscience, and a guide divine, to sustain him lest he faint.

And, after all, in spite of the inertia of their will, men



are, in their inmost hearts, on the side of God, rather than their own, in this matter. They know it would be a bad thing for them to have nothing to resist. They would like it, but they could not honour it; and in proportion as it was comfortable, it would be contemptible. They have always paid their most willing homage to those who have refused to sit down and break bread with evil things, and have made a battle-field of life. Even out of the primitive conflict with brute *Nature*, in which rocks were split, and monsters tamed, they evoked a God; and under the name of *Hercules*, invented an excuse for their first and simplest worship. No sooner is this physical contest closed, and the earth compelled to yield a roadway and a shelter to men, than the scene of struggle is changed, and they come into conflict with *each other*. Instead of dead resistance they encounter living force: from obstructive matter their competitor rises to aggressive mind: and whoever shows himself master of the higher qualities demanded in the collision, for justice' sake, of man with man,—the fixed resolve, the dauntless courage, the subjection of appetite, the sympathy with the weak and the oppressed,—is honoured by all as a hero, and remembered by his nation as its pride. But when the game of war is done, it is found that in struggling to a firm and established order of society, men have not got rid of all their foes and driven evil from off their world. Inward corruption may waste what outward assault could not destroy. Amid the luxuries and repose of peace, the springs of moral hardihood become enfeebled: guilty negligence, indulgent laxity, plausible selfishness, and

even greedy hypocrisy, eat into the world's heart. A secret spirit of temptation, too powerful for its degeneracy, hovers over it and threatens to darken it into a Hell: when lo! at the crisis of its fate, there comes forth one to meet and to defy even this Invisible Fiend of *moral evil*, and by the wonders of prayer and toil and sorrow, make Lucifer, as lightning, fall from heaven: one, far different from the Strong Arm that subdues creation, and the Brave Heart that conquers men: being the Divine Soul that puts to flight the hosts of Satan, and, as the leader and perfecter of Faith, pushes the victories of men into the only unconquered realm,—the shadowy domain of Sin and its dread prisons of Remorse. Thus the primitive conflict with nature, which makes a Hercules, rises into the conflict with man, which makes the hero, and culminates in that infinitely higher conflict with the spirit of Evil, which is impersonated in Christ. We instinctively do homage in some sort to them all; only admiring the former as manly; and reverencing the last as godlike. And it may be remarked that, as the world has passed through these several stages of strife to produce a Christendom; so, by relaxing in the enterprises it has learnt, does it tend downwards, through inverted steps, to wildness and the waste again. Let a people give up their contest with moral evil; disregard the injustice, the ignorance, the greediness, that may prevail among them, and part more and more with the *Christian* element of their civilization; and, in declining this battle with Sin, they will inevitably get embroiled with men. Threats of war and revolution punish their unfaithfulness; and if then, instead of re-

tracing their steps, they yield again and are driven before the storm ;—the very arts they had created, the structures they had raised, the usages they had established, are swept away : “in that very day their thoughts perish.” The portion they had reclaimed from the young earth’s ruggedness is lost ; and failing to stand fast against man, they finally get embroiled with Nature, and are thrust down beneath her ever-living hand.

The Law of conflict which God thus terribly proclaims in the history of nations, is no less distinctly legible in the moral life of individuals. In an old and complicated structure of society, the number is multiplied of those who exist in a state of benumbed habit ; who walk through their years methodically, not finding it needful to be more than half awake ; who take their passage through human life in an easy chair, and no more think of any self-mortifying work than of the ancient pilgrimage on foot ; and are so pleased with the finish and varnish of the world around them, as to fancy demons and dangers all cleaned out. And thus the perfected customs, the smooth, macadamised ways of life, which are all excellent as facilities for swifter activity, have the effect of putting activity to sleep : the means of helping us to our proper ends, become the means of our wholly forgetting them : and looking out of the windows, we leave behind the commission on which we are sent, and set up as travellers for pleasure. This kind of peril is the peculiar temptation which besets all, and makes imbeciles of many, in an artificial community like ours. The battle of life is not now, so often as of old, thrust upon us from with-

out: it does not give us the first blow, which it were poltroonery to fly: but it is internal and invisible: it has to be sought and found by voluntary enterprise: it is not with palpable flesh and blood beneath the sun, but with viewless spirits, that cling to us in the dark. To capture the appetites and make them content with their proper servitude: to change the heart of ambition, and turn its aspiring eye from the lamp of heathen glory to the starlight of a Christian sanctity: to seize anger and yoke it under curb of reason to the service of justice and of right: to lash the sluggish will to quicker and more earnest toil: to charm the dull affections into sweeter and more lively moods, and tempt their timid shyness to break into song and mingle voices with the melody of life: to rouse pity from its sleep and compel it to choose a task and begin its plan;—all this implies a vigilance, a devotion, an endurance, which, though only natural to the “good soldier of Jesus Christ,” are beyond the mark of the sceptics and triflers of the present age.

I have said *sceptics and triflers*. And be assured the conjunction is true and natural. The shrinking from difficulty, the dread of ridicule, the love of ease, which drain off the sap of a man’s moral earnestness, soon dry up the sources of all moral faith from the very roots of him. Though in one sense it is true that he must believe before he acts, yet assuredly he will not long go on believing, when he has ceased to act. The coward who skulks from the fight mutters, as he retires, that ‘there is really nothing worth fighting for.’ And those who decline the high battle of the Christian life per-

suade themselves, that there is no worthy field, no peremptory call, no dreadful foe : and the clarion of God which pierces and inspires faithful souls is no more to them than the pipe of hypocrites. The plain of prophet's warfare, where every step should be circum-spect, becomes in their eyes a soft and fruitful stroll ; and the sins which good men have spent themselves in driving back, turn out to be the pleasantest companions, of whom it was quite a bigotry to think harm. Instances of this kind of self-sophistication must have presented themselves to the observation of all. They plainly show, that any truth a man ceases to live by necessarily becomes to him, if he only persevere, an entire falsehood. God insists on having a concurrence between our practice and our thought. If we proceed to make a contradiction between them, he forthwith begins to abolish it : and if the Will does not rise to the Reason, the Reason must be degraded to the Will. This is no other than that "giving over of men to a reprobate mind," by which "the truth of God is changed into a lie."

It is needless to point out the several devices by which practical unfaithfulness contrives to bring about speculative unbelief. They are almost as various as the individual minds producing them : and agree only in their result ; viz. the loss of all moral earnestness ; the decline of any feeling of reality about the higher ends of life ; the disinclination to anything that interrupts the easy play of Self-love ; and the subsidence of the mighty wind of resolution which should sweep direct and steady through the true man's course, into fitful airs of affectation and puffs of caprice. It is not the failure

of this or that doctrinal conviction, that we need in itself lament ; of this sort we could part perhaps with a good deal of helpless trying to believe, without being at all the worse : but it is the loosening of Moral Faith ; the fluctuating state of the boundary between right and wrong, or even the suspicion of its non-existence ; the absence from men's minds of anything worth living and dying for ; the lawyer-like impartiality, consisting of an indiscriminate advocacy, for hire or favour, of any cause irrespective of its goodness,—this it is that marks how we are drifting away from our proper anchorage. We seem to have reached an age of soft affections and emasculated conscience, full of pity for pain and disease, of horror at blood and death ; but doubting whether anything is wicked that is not cruel, and reconciling itself even to that on sufficient considerations of advantage. Does the complaint appear too strong and eager ? It is, however, solemn and deliberate : for when I look back over a few years, I find there is no sort of personal libertinism, of domestic infidelity, of mercantile dishonesty ; no breach of faith in States, no mean dishonour in officials, no shuffling expediency in public life ; no kindling of national malignity, no outrage of military atrocity, no extreme of theological Jesuitry ; which we have not heard excused by amiable laxity, and shrugged off into the dark ; or palliated in books enjoying disgraceful popularity ; or defended and admired by statesmen who should elevate and not deprave a nation's mind. Is it then too much to fear, that the new generation may grow up with bewildered vision ; without the clear and single eye of conscience full of light ; and therefore without the reso-

lute and hardy will of one who plainly sees what he is to avoid and what attain? There is a remarkable intellectual subtlety engaged now-a-days in perplexing men's moral convictions. On the one hand, there is the celebrated doctrine of happiness, ingeniously spun into a logical texture, to entangle those who are neither fine enough to pass through its meshes, nor strong enough to rend them:—the doctrine which assures you that enjoyment is the great end of existence, and is the only real element of worth in the objects of our choice. Of this I will say no more at present, than that it plainly makes all duty a matter of taste, and reduces the distinction between evil and good to the difference between pills and peaches: and that it puts an end to the spirit of moral combat of human life, and metamorphoses the “good soldier of Jesus Christ” into one knows not what strange sort of mock-heroic insincerity. At the feet of Epicurus a man must needs lay the Christian armour down: for one can hardly fancy the most logical of mortals tying on a breast-plate of faith, seeking the battle-field, and fighting—*to be happy*. But there is a more insidious doctrine than this, largely infused, from the philosophy of a neighbouring country, into the literature of the age: a doctrine not of the appetites, but of the imagination; not the utilitarian but the æsthetic, contrary of the true faith of Duty. This would persuade us, that the moral Faculty is all very well as *one* of the elements of human nature; is highly respectable in its proper place among the rest, and could not be absent without leaving a grievous gap, interruptive of the symmetry of the *man*: but that it must aspire to no more than this mod-

est participation with its companions in the perfection of our being ; that it must not presume to meddle with what does not belong to it, or refuse to make liberal concessions to the demands of beauty, expediency and self-love ; and that it would be very narrow-minded, or, in fashionable phrase, very *one-sided*, to try everything before the tribunal of this solitary power. Here also, only under more artful disguise, is a complete denial of all responsibility. Something, it is true, appears to be allowed to conscience ; a part is given it to play ; and the point professedly disputed is not its *existence* with an appropriate function, but its exclusive pretensions and absolute *authority*. Unhappily, however, when this much is discarded, it is only in semblance that anything remains. A moral faculty with a merely concurrent jurisdiction, or from whose decisions there is some appeal, is a palpable self-contradiction. As well might we propose to frame a government without any one highest. Conscience *is* authority,—divine authority,—universal authority ; or it is nothing. It is a right-royal power, that cannot stoop to serve : dethrone it, and it dies. Not even can it consent to be acknowledged as a “ citizen-king,” chosen by the suffrages of equals, open to their criticism, and removeable at their pleasure. Either it must be owned as bearing a sacred and underrived sovereignty, against which argument is impiety, and dreams of redress incur the penalties of treason ; or it will decline the earthly sceptre and retire to heaven. It reigns not by the acquiescent will of other powers, but is supreme by nature over all Will : nor rules according to any given law, being itself the fountain of all



law, the guardian of order, the promulgator of right. Its prerogatives are penetrating and paramount, like God. In the noble words of an old writer, "Of (moral) Law there can be no less acknowledged, than that her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world: all things in heaven and earth do her homage, the very least as feeling her care, the greatest as not exempted from her power: both angels and men, and creatures of what condition soever, though each in different sort and manner, yet all with uniform consent, admiring her as the mother of their peace and joy."\*

Let none then prevail with us to think, that there is any period of life, or any sphere of our activity, or any hour of our rest, which can escape the range of right and wrong, and be secluded from the eye of God. Not that we need grow stiff with the posture of unnatural vigilance, or assume the circumspection of a scrupulous and anxious mind: *that* would only show that the formal and obedient will was yet hard and dry; that it was chiselled still into fitting shapes by the severe tool of care, instead of flowing down into the graceful moulds of a loving and trustful heart. The rule of a divine spirit over our whole nature is, in truth, of all things the most natural; natural as the blossom that crowns the tree, without which it would miss half its beauty, and all its fruit. Nothing can be more offensive to a good mind than the eagerness to claim, for some portions of our time, a kind of holiday-escape from the presence of duty and the consecration of pure affections; to thrust off all noble thoughts and sacred influ-

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\* Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity: end of B. I.

ences into the most neglected corner of existence ; and drive away Religion, as if it were a haggard necromancer that must some time come, instead of a guardian-angel that must never go. It were shameful to sanction the low-minded sentiment which so often says of *early life*, that it is the time for enjoyment, and makes this an excuse for dispensing with everything else, and declining all demands upon the hardness of "the good soldier of Jesus Christ." According to the canons of this wretched criticism, Life would have no secret unity: it would be no sacred Epic, sung throughout by any constant inspiration ; but a monster of incongruity ; its first volume, a jest-book ; its second, a table of interest ; and its last, a mixture of the satire and the liturgy. For my own part, I can form no more odious image of human life, than a youth of levity and pleasure, followed by a maturity and age of severity and pietism. *Both* sights, in this succession, are alike deplorable : a young soul without wonder, without reverence, without tenderness, without inspiration : with superficial mirth, and deep indifference : standing on the threshold of life's awful temple, with easy smile, without uncovered head, or bended knee, or breathless listening ! Is that the time, do you say, for enjoyment ? Yes ;—and for enthusiasm, for conviction, for depth of affection, and devotedness of will : and if there be no tints of heaven in that morning haze of life, it will be vain to seek them in the staring light of the later noon. And therefore is that other sight most questionable, of religion becoming conspicuous first in mid-life, and presenting itself as the mere precipitate from the settling of the young blood.

Every one may have noticed examples of men, long spending their best powers, the mellow heart, the supple thought, the agile will, in the service of themselves,—at length, with the retreating juices of nature and sin, baked by the drying heats of life into the professing saint;—like the rotting-tree, simply decaying into the grotesque semblance of something human or ghostly, which is no product of its proper vitality, and does but mimic other natures when the functions have departed from its own. Who can avoid looking on such cases with a somewhat suspicious eye? If indeed the youth has been intrinsically noble, it is not for us to deny, that some under-current thence, after seeming loss in dark caverns of the earth, may re-appear to fertilize the meadows, and raise the sweet after-grass, of autumnal life. But it is not often that truth can allow the interpretation thus suggested by hope and charity. Usually, the religion thus embraced is taken up, less because it is heartily believed and trusted, than because a distrust has arisen of everything else. It is the penance of an uneasy mind;—a memorial for pardon addressed as to an enemy, not the quest of shelter with an Eternal friend. Vainly shall we attempt to get the wages of a campaign that has not been fought, and seize the crown of mastery, without having “contended lawfully.” The repose of honest victory can only follow the strife of noble conflict: and the true peace of God is the appointed pension of “the good soldier of Jesus Christ.”

## THE REALM OF ORDER.

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### 1 CORINTHIANS XIV. 33.

GOD IS NOT THE AUTHOR OF CONFUSION, BUT OF PEACE, AS IN ALL  
CHURCHES OF THE SAINTS.

IN the production and preservation of order, all men recognize something that is sacred. We have an intuitive conviction that it is not, at bottom, the earliest condition of things; that whatever is, rose out of some dead ground-work of confusion and nothingness, and incessantly gravitates thitherwards again; and that, without a positive energy of God, no universe could have emerged from the void, or be suspended out of it for an hour. There is no task more indubitably divine than the creation of beauty out of chaos, the imposition of law upon the lawless, and the setting forth of times and seasons from the stagnant and eternal night. And so, the Bible opens with a work of arrangement, and closes with one of restoration; looks round the ancient firmament at first, and sees that all is good, and surveys the new heavens at last, to make sure that evil is no more. Far back in the old Eternity, it ushers us into God's presence: and he is engaged in dividing the light from the darkness, and shaping the orbs that determine days and

years ; turning the vapours of the abyss into the sweet breath of life, teaching the little grass to grow, and trusting the forest tree with the seed that is in itself, to be punctually dropped upon the earth : filling the mountain slope, the sedgy plain, the open air, the hidden deep, with various creatures kept by happy instincts within the limits of his will ; and setting over all, in likeness of himself, the adapting intellect, the affectionate spirit, and mysterious conscience, of lordly and reflective man. The birth of order was the first act of God, who rested not till all was blessed and sanctified. And far forward in the Eternity to come, we are brought before his face again for judgment. The spoiling of his works, the wild wandering from his will, he will bear no more : the disorder that has gathered together, shall be rectified : he will again divide the darkness from the light ; and confusion and wrong,—all that hurts and destroys,—shall be thrust into unknown depths : while wisdom and holiness shall be as the brightness of the firmament and as the stars forever and ever. As it was when he was Alpha, so will it be when he is Omega. He is one that “loveth pureness” still : and the stream of Providence,—the river that went out of Eden,—however foul with the taint of evil while it takes its course through human history, shall become the river of the water of life, clear as crystal, that nurtures the secret root of all holy and immortal things.

This Divine regard for order proceeds from an attribute in which we also are made to participate, and which puts us into awful kindred, with his perfections.

Intelligent Free-will,—a self-determining Mind,—is the only true, originating Cause of which we can even conceive ; the sole power capable of giving Law where there was none before, and of *creating the Necessity* by which it is thenceforth obeyed. There was a *Will*, before there was a *Must*. Nothing else, we feel assured, could avail, amid a boundless primeval unsettledness, to mark out a certain fixed method of existence, and no other, and make it to be ; could draw forth an actual, defined, and amenable universe from the sphere of infinite possibilities. The indeterminate, the chaotic, lies in our thought behind and around the determinate and constituted : and to sketch a positive system and bid its vivid lines of order shine on the dark canvass of negation, is the special office of the free self-moving spirit, whereby God lifts us up above nature into the image of himself. Hence we too, in proportion as we approach him, shall put our hand to a light task ; shall organize the loose materials that, touched by a creative will, may cease to be without form and void ; shall set our expanse of years into periods ruled by the lights of duty, and refreshed by the shades of prayer : shall mould every shapeless impulse, subdue every rugged difficulty, fill every empty space of opportunity with good, and breathe a living soul into the very dust and clod of our existence. As “ God is not the author of confusion, but of peace,” so the service of God infuses a spirit of method and proportion into the outward life and the inward mind ; and pure religion is a *principle of universal order*.

No two things indeed can be more at variance with

each other, than a *devout*, and an *unregulated* life. Devotion is holy regulation, guiding hand and heart ; a surrender of self-will,—that main source of uncertainty and caprice,—and a loving subordination to the only rule that cannot change. Devotion is the steady attraction of the soul towards one luminous object, discerned across the passionate infinite, and drawing thoughts, deeds, affections, into an orbit silent, seasonal, and accurately true. In a mind submitted to the touch of God, there is a certain rhythm of music, which, however it may swell into the thunder or sink into a sigh, has still a basis of clear unbroken melody. The discordant starts of passion, the whimsical snatches of appetite, the inarticulate whinings of discontent, are never heard : and the spirit is like an organ, delivered from the tumbling of chance pressures on its keys, and given over to the hand of a divine skill. Nay, so inexorable is the demand of religion for order, that it shrinks from any one allowed irregularity, as the musician from a constant mistake in the performance of some heavenly strain. Its perpetual effort is to prevail over all things loose and turbid ; to swallow up the elements of confusion in human life ; and banish chance from the soul, as God excludes it from the universe. It is quite impossible that an idle, floating, spirit can ever look with clear eye to God : spreading its miserable anarchy before the symmetry of the creative Mind : in the midst of a disorderly being, that has neither centre nor circumference, kneeling beneath the glorious sky, that everywhere has both : and from a life that is *all* failure, turning to the Lord of the silent stars, of

whose punctual thought it is, that "not one faileth." The heavens, with their everlasting faithfulness, look down on no sadder contradiction, than the sluggard and the slattern in their prayers.

To maintain the sacred governance of life is to recognize and preserve the due *rank* of all things within us and without. For there *is* a system of ranks extending through the spiritual world of which we form a part. The faculties and affections of the single mind are no democracy of principles, each of which, in the determinations of the will, is to have equal suffrage with the rest ; but an orderly series, in which every member has a right divine over that below. The individuals composing the communities of men do not arrange themselves into a dead level of spirits, in which none are above and none beneath ; but there are centres of natural majesty that break up the mass into groups and proportions that you cannot change. And man himself, by the highest Will, is inserted between things of which he is lord, and obligations which he must serve. In short, the hierarchy of nature is Episcopalian throughout : and in conforming to its order, the active part of our duty consists in this ; that we must rule and keep under our hand whatever is beneath us ; assigning to everything its due place.

The whole scheme of our voluntary actions, all that we do from morning to night of every day, is beyond doubt entrusted to our control. No power, without our consent, can share the monarchy of this realm, or constrain us to lift a hand or speak a word, where Resolution bids us be still and silent. And from our in-



most consciousness we do know, that, whenever we will, we can *make ourselves* execute whatever we approve, and strangle in its birth whatever we abhor. To-morrow morning, if you choose to take up a spirit of such power, you may rise like a soul without a past; fresh for the future as an Adam untempted yet; disengaged from the manifold coil of willing usage, and with every link of guilty habit shaken off. I know indeed that you *will not*; that no man ever will; but the hindrance is with yourself alone. The coming hours are open yet,—pure and spotless receptacles for whatever you may deposit there; pledged to no evil, secure of no good: neither mortgaged to greedy passion, nor given to generous toil. There they lie in non-existence still; ready to be organized by a creative spirit of beauty, or made foul with deformity and waste. Perhaps it is this thought, this secret sense of moral contingency, that gives to so simple a thing as the beat of a pendulum, or the forward start of the finger on the dial, a solemnity beyond expression. The gliding heavens are less awful at midnight than the ticking clock. Their noiseless movement, undivided, serene, and everlasting, is as the flow of divine duration, that cannot affect the place of the eternal God. But these sharp strokes, with their inexorably steady intersections, so agree with our successive thoughts, that they seem like the punctual stops counting off our very souls into the past;—the flitting messengers that dip for a moment on our hearts, then bear the pure or sinful thing irrevocably away;—light with mystic hopes as they arrive, charged with sad realities as they depart. So passes, and we cannot

stay it, our only portion of opportunity : the fragments of that blessed chance, which has been travelling to us from all eternity, are dropping quickly off. Let us start up and live : here come the moments that cannot be had again ; some few may yet be filled with imperishable good.

There is no conscious power like that which a wise and Christian heart asserts, when resolved to absorb the dead matter of its existence, and from the elements of former waste and decay to put forth a new and vernal life. The accurate economy of instants, the proportionate distribution of duties, the faithful observance of law, as it is an exercise of strength, so gives a sense of strenuous liberty. Compared with this, how poor a delusion is the spurious freedom which is the idler's boast ! He says that he has his time at his disposal : but in truth, he is at the disposal of his time. No novelty of the moment canvasses him in vain : any chance suggestion may have him ; whiffed as he is hither and thither like a stray feather on the wandering breeze. The true stamp of manhood is not on him, and therefore the image of godship has faded away : for he is Lord of nothing, not even of himself ; his will is ever waiting to be tempted, and conscience is thrust out among the mean rabble of candidates that court it. The wing of resolution, mighty to lift us nearer God, is broken quite, and there is nothing to stay the downward gravitation of a nature passive and heavy too. And so, first a weak affection for persons supplants the sense of right : to be itself, in turn, destroyed by a baser appetite for things. This woful declension is the

natural outgoing of those who presume to try an unregulated life. A systematic organization of the personal habits, devised in moments of devout and earnest reason, is a necessary means, amid the fluctuations of the spirit, of giving to the better mind its rightful authority over the worse. Those only will neglect it, who either do not know their weakness, or have lost all healthy reliance on their strength.

It is a part then of the faithfulness and freedom of a holy mind, to keep the whole range of outward action under severe control ; to administer the hours in full view of the vigilant police of conscience ; and to introduce even into the lesser materials of life the precision and concinnity which are the natural symbols of a pure and constant spirit. And it belongs to the humility of a devout heart, not to trust itself to the uncertain ebb and flow of thought, and float opportunity away on the giddy waters of inconstancy ; but to arrange a method of life in the hour of high purpose and clear insight, and then compel the meaner self to work out the prescription of the nobler. Yet this, after all, though an essential check to our instability, is but the beginning of wisdom. The mere distribution of action in quantity, however well proportioned, does not fulfil the requisites of a Christian order. This surveyor's work,—this partitioning out the superficies of life, and marking off the orchard and the field, the meadow and the grove,—will make no grass to grow, will open no blossom and mature no seed. The seasonal culture of the soul requires all this ; yet may yield poor produce, when this is done. Without the deeper symmetry of the spirit, the harmo-

nious working of living powers there, the boundaries of action, however neat, will be but a void framework, enclosing barrenness and sand. Despise not the ceremonial of the moral life ; it is our needful speech and articulation ; but oh ! mistake it not for the true and infinite worship that should breathe through it. Mere mechanism, however perfect, has this misfortune, that it cannot set fast its own loose screws, but rather shakes them into more frightful confusion ; till the power, late so smooth, works only crash and ruin, and goes headlong back to chaos. And so is it where there is nothing profounder than the systematizing faculty in the organization of a man's life. Destitute of adaptive and restorative energy, with no perception of a spiritual order that may remain above disturbance and express itself through obstructions all the more, interruptions bewilder and upset him. Ill health in himself or the afflictions of others, that stop his projects and give him pause by a touch on his affections, irritate and weary him ; he grows dizzy with the inroads on his schemes, gives up the count so hopefully begun, and runs down in rapid discords. The soul of Christian order has in it something quite different from this ; more like the blessed force of nature that consumes its withered leaves as punctually as they fall, and so makes the *spread* of decay a thing impossible ; that has so unwearied an appetite for the creation of beauty and productiveness, that it makes no complaint of rottenness and death, but draws from them the sap of life, and weaves again the foliage and the fruit. No *less* a vital spontaneity than this is needed in the Christian soul ; for in human life,

as in external nature, the elements of corruption and disorder are always accumulating; and unless they are to breed pestilence, must be kept down and effectually absorbed. As in science, so in practical existence, our theory or ideal must ever be framed upon assumptions only partially true. The conditions required for its fulfilment will never be present *all at once and all alone*: so that the realization will be but approximate; and a constant tension of the soul is needed to press it nearer and nearer to the ultimate design. For want of a religious source, an exact apparent order in the life may coexist with an essential disorder secreted within. Are we not conscious that so it is, whenever the toil of our hands, though punctually visited, receives no consent of our hearts; when the spirit flies with heavy wing from reach to reach of time, and, like Noah's dove, seeing only wave after wave of a dreary flood, finds no rest for the sole of its foot, till it gets back to the ark of its narrow comforts? Is it not a plain inversion of the true order of things, when we do our work for the sake of the following rest, instead of accepting our rest as the preparative for work? And while this continues to be the case, there will be a hidden aching, a dark corroding speck within the soul, which no outward method or proportion can ever charm away. Nor can the precision of the will be even sustained at all without the symmetry of the affections. As well might you think to set your broken compass right by hand: if it be foul and stiff, swinging and trembling no more in obedience to its mysterious attraction, its blessed guidance is gone; and after the

first straight line of your direction, you sail upon the chances of destruction.

To prevent this evil, of method just creeping up the lower part of life, and passing no further, no positive rule, from the very nature of the case, can well be given. We can only say that, besides subjecting whatever is beneath us, there is also this passive part of Christian order, that we must surrender ourselves entirely to what is above us; and having put all lesser things into their place, we must then take and keep our own. Could indeed this proportion of the affections invariably remain, it would supersede all our mechanism, and take care of the outward harmony: and we should have no need to apply the rules of a Franklin to the spirit of a Christ. But even short of this blessed emancipation, we should rise into a higher atmosphere; escaping the wretched thralldom of reluctant duties; and yield a free consent, through love, to that which else were irksome; quietly depositing ourselves on every work that brings its sacred claim, and moving in it, instead of writhing to get beyond it. They tell you that habit reconciles you in time to many unwelcome things. Let us not trust to this alone. Custom indeed sweetens the rugged lot when the cheerful soul *is in it*: it does but embitter it the more, when the soul *stays out of it*. But when harshnesses are borne, and even spontaneously embraced, for the sake of God who hints them to our conscience, a perfect agreement ensues between the spirit and the letter of our life. We feel no weariness; delivered now from the intolerable burthen of flagging affections. We are disturbed by no ambitions; con-

scious of no jealousies of other men : for competition has no place in things divine : and even in lower matters, it is, to the thoughtful and devout, but a quiet interrogation of Providence ; and the true heart that prefers the question cannot be discontented with the answer. We cease to desire a change : we feel that life affords no time for restlessness ; that in persistency is our only hope : and a blessed conservatism of spirit comes over us, that claims nothing but simple leave to go on serving and loving still. And so Existence, to the devout, becomes, not confused, but peaceful, like a Service in the Churches of the Saints.

## XIII.

### CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF MERIT.

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LUKE XVII. 10.

SO LIKEWISE YE, WHEN YE SHALL HAVE DONE ALL THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE COMMANDED YOU, SAY, 'WE ARE UNPROFITABLE SERVANTS; WE HAVE DONE THAT WHICH WAS OUR DUTY TO DO.'

To a thoughtful interpreter of human nature, nothing so plainly reveals the hidden principle of a man's life, as the estimation in which he holds himself. Whether the standard which guides him be conventional, moral, or divine; whether the invisible presence that haunts him be that of the world's opinion, or his own self-witness, or the eye of God,—may be seen in the contented self-delusion, or intelligent self-knowledge, or noble self-forgetfulness, which reveal themselves through his natural language and demeanour. Too often you meet with a man who manifestly looks at himself with the eyes of others;—and those too, not the wise who are above him, but the associates on the same level or the inferiors beneath it, to whom he may be supposed an object of conspicuous attention. He stands well with himself, because he stands well with them: and nothing would make him angry with himself, except the forfeiture of his position among them. Their expectations



from him being satisfied, or somewhat more, he thinks his work is done, and turns loose into a holiday life, to do as he likes at his own unlicensed will. Their sentiments are the mirror, by which he dresses up his life : as his self-complacency is but the reflection of their smiles, his self-reproach is but an imitation of their frowns,—mere regret for error, not remorse for wrong ; overheard in the cry of vexation, “ Fool that I am ! ” not in the whisper of penitence, “ God be merciful to me a sinner ! ” He every way impresses you with the conviction that, if nothing were demanded of him, nothing would be given ; that he simply comes into the terms imposed by men as conditions of peace and good fellowship ; and did all men resemble him, the Cynic’s theory would not be far wrong, that morality is but the conciliation of opinion, and society a company for mutual protection.

However, if all men were such as he, and brought no strictly moral element into human affairs, it is plain that this much-vaunted power of “ public opinion ” could never get formed. Till somebody has a conscience, nobody can feel a law. Accordingly, we everywhere meet with a higher order of men, who not only comprehend the wishes, but respect the rights, of others ; who are ruled, not by expectation without, but by the sense of obligation within : who do, not the agreeable, but the just ; and, even amid the storm of public rage, can stand fast, with rooted foot and airy brow, like the granite mountain in the sea. Noble however as this foundation of uprightness always is, there may arise from it a self-estimate too proud and firm. If the stern

consciousness of right have no softening of human affection, and kindling of diviner aspiration, it will give the lofty sense of personal merits, that makes the Stoic, and misses the Saint. To walk beneath the porch is still infinitely less than to kneel before the cross. We do nothing well, till we learn our worth ; nothing best, till we forget it. And this will not be till, besides being built into the real veracious laws of this world, we are also conscious of the inspection of another : till we live, not only fairly among equals, but submissively under the Most High ; and while casting the shadow of a good life on the scene below, lie in the light of vaster spheres above. Virtue, feeling its deep base in earth, lifts its head aloft : sanctity, conscious of its far off glimpse at heaven, bends it low. And yet, outwardly, they are not different, but the same : one visible character may correspond with either ; only standing amid relations incomplete in the one case, completed in the other. They are but as the different aspects of the granite isle of which we spake. Let clouds roof out the heaven and shut a darkness in, and its grey crags *look down*, with the grandeur of a gloomy monarch, sheltering the thunder and defying the flood. Sweep the rack away, and throw upon the hemisphere of morning air, and it lies low in the soft light and sleeps with *upturned* gaze, like a sunny child of deep and sky, cradled on the summer sea.

How is it that minds equally engaged in the outward service of duty, think of themselves so differently ? Whence the self-reliance, bordering on self-exaggeration, of a Zeno, a Franklin, a Bentham ?—the divine

humility of a Pascal, a Howard, a Channing, and of the Master whose lineaments they variously reflect? The answer will present itself spontaneously, if we inquire into the true doctrine of *merit*. This word, which has its equivalent in every language, expresses a meaning familiar, I suppose, to all men: and by referring to a few common modes of speech and thought, the contents of that meaning may be unfolded and defined.

There is no merit in *paying one's debts*. To make such an act a ground of praise infallibly betrays a base mind and a dishonest community. This cannot well be denied by any clear-thoughted man, free from the influence of passion. Whatever be the practice of society with respect to the insolvent, surely it is a mean perversion of the natural moral sense to imagine that his temporary inability, or length of delay, can cancel one iota of his obligation: these things only serve to increase its stringency; tardy reparation being a poor substitute for punctual fidelity. I am far from denying that circumstances of special and blameless misfortune may justify him in accepting the voluntary mercy of friends willing to "forgive him all that debt." But whoever avails himself of mere legal release as a moral exemption, is a candidate for infamy in the eyes of all uncorrupted men. The law necessarily interposes to put a period to the controversy between debtor and creditor, and prohibit the further struggle between the arts of the one and the cruelty of the other: but it cannot annul their moral relation. Obligation cannot, any more than God, grow old and die: till it is obeyed, it stops in the *present tense*, and represents the eternal *Now*. Time

can wear no duty out. Neglect may smother it out of sight : opportunity may pass, and turn it from our guardian angel into our haunting fiend : but while it yet remains possible, it clings to our identity, and refuses to let us go. It was the first sign of the rich publican's change from the heathen to the Christian mind that he "restored four-fold" the gains that were not his. And our conversion yet remains to be wrought, until, instead of applauding as of high desert the man who repairs at length the mischief he has done, we condemn to shame every one who can buy an indulgence with an unpaid debt.

Again, there is no merit in *speaking or acting the simple truth* ; in keeping one's promissory word, and doing one's stipulated work. In this there is no more than all men are entitled to expect from us. It is their manifest right : and if, instead of respecting its demands, we give them falsehoods with our lips and life, we not merely lose all claim to their praise, but, sinking far from innocence, become obnoxious to their reproach. From this rule there are, no doubt, many apparent departures in the practical conduct of human affairs ; and we often make it a theme for public eulogy that a citizen has lived among us with unbroken pledge and faithful achievement. This, however, is hardly an example of the strict and unmixed judgment of conscience, but rather a concession from that pity and fear with which we look on human nature tried with so long a strife. It springs up on the retrospect of an *entire life* with its visible temptations prostrated and its strength triumphant ; and would be put to silence by a single instance

of evident bad faith. Moreover, in cases of such unviolated truth, there is always something more than simple abstinence from wrong. They imply, by their very persistency, a force of character, which cannot have spent itself in mere standing still, however firm. The man who, under all deflecting importunities, can keep an immovable footing against the wrong, has a life within him that, when the assault is over, will push on the victories of right: and we justly accept the negative strength, as symptomatic of the positive power, of conscience. On this account it is that we honour him who never lies, nor cheats, nor stoops to mean evasions; not that it would be otherwise than shameful if he did; but to be throughout clear of all such shame is the sign that he has not a passive, but a productive soul; and we praise him for what he is, rather than for what he is not.

Once more: there is no merit in *restraining the appetites from excess*; in the avoidance of intemperance and waste; in freedom from wild and self-destructive passions, that bear the soul away on a whirlwind it cannot rule. We expect of every man, that he shall remain master of himself; and we feel that he does not reach the natural level of his humanity, unless he governs what he knows to be beneath him, and, as "a faithful and wise steward," manifests a moral prudence in administering the domain of its own spirit. A well-ordered economy of the personal habits brings so evident a return of value to those who practise it, and is so fit a consequence of the natural rights of reason over the will, that it is rather the assumed ground and indis-

pensable condition, than the actual essence, of any excellence we can honour and revere. If ever we bestow upon it more than a cold commendation, it is in cases where it may be taken as a pledge of something further, that does not directly meet the eye: where it appears, for instance, amid examples of guilty license, and inducements to a low and lax career; and can only have grown up by the triumph of pure and divine energy within, under the obstructions of circumstance and the contradictions of men. But except when we thus find some saint amid the brood of Circe, we deem it but poor praise to a human soul, that it is not like the brutes, the creature of impulse and slave of chance affection.

From these instances it is easy to collect one of the essential characteristics of all merit. There is no room for it in the sphere of personal and prudential conduct: it can arise only in the case of duty to others. And *there* it obtains no admission, so long as we merely satisfy the claims of justice, and comply with that which law or honour have written in the bond. Failing in this, we incur guilt and the merit; *not* failing, we are entitled to no praise. The first entrance of merit, according to the sentiments of all men, is where our performance *goes beyond the acknowledged rights of another*; and we spontaneously offer what human obligation could not ask.

There is a second characteristic admitted to be essential to every meritorious act. It must be *all our own*, the spontaneous product of our individual will and affection. If in the delirium of fever, or the fancies of somnambulism, you are led, by the command of some

guide who wields you at his word, to put forth a deed of outward charity, you will take no more credit for it, than for the heroic achievements you may accomplish in your dreams. You had no more to do with the act than with the sin of Lucifer. You were not the agent in the case ; you were only the stage on which the phenomenon took place. And show me, in any instance, that a man is not the originating cause of his own apparent deed, but in this manifestation of him, only an effect of some extraneous power ; show me that he would never have done the kindly thing, had he not been put up to it by a force that pulls the wires of his obedient mind ; show me even, that he had some personal end in view, and proposed to make an investment in generosity ;—and it is in vain that you ask for my admiration : as soon could I respect the industry of a clock, or the industry of a galvanized limb. If the prompter once peeps out, I know the whole to be a piece of acting, and the illusion of reality is instantaneously gone ; only, instead of the avowedly fictitious, I have the insidiously false, and am the dupe, not of professed entertainment, but of real deception. *Spontaneity* then is an essential to each man's good desert : and in precise proportion to the partnership there may be in his agency, will be the diminution of his share.

Here then we have the two requisites and characteristics of every meritorious act : it must overlap the limits of mere justice, and go beyond the strict rights of the being to whom it is directed ; and it must be all our own. Take away either of these properties, and merit disappears.

Now it is the characteristic of all Moral systems, as such, that they allow the reality of human merit : of all Religious systems, as such, and of the simply religious heart that has no system at all, that they disown it. The different forms of faith, however, do this in different ways ; and the following distinction is to be carefully observed :—the spurious representations of Christianity take away all demerit at the same time ; while the true have in them this mystery, that while they remove the lustre of merit, the shadow of demerit remains.

Every Fatalist or Predestinarian scheme destroys merit by denying that our actions are our own, and referring them wholly to powers of which we are not lords but slaves. We are ourselves, it is contended, true creators of nothing ; but creatures, absolutely disposed of by mightier forces, like clay whirled upon the potter's wheel, and moulded by his hand ;—determinate products turned out from the great workshop of the universe, with functions purely mechanical, like a more complex kind of tool. That we *seem* to have a self-moving power, to put forth spontaneous and underived effort belonging wholly to our personality, is, in the view of this doctrine, an illusion of our short-sightedness, due only to our ignorance or forgetfulness of the prime mover of our energies. All this, like the heaving of a steam-engine, or the labouring of a ship at sea, is done *for* and *upon* us, not *by* us : and when, in our remorse for the past, and our resolves for the future, we assume that we are in a responsible trust for our own spiritual state, we are dupes of an ignorant delusion, at which philosophic spirits stand by and smile. Fast locked within the series of



natural effects, we are the ground on which phenomena appear for their display, but not their cause: the inventor and exhibitor stands behind the scenes, and shows us off. Life, in short, is but the long phantasm of the sleep-walker; replete with the consciousness of nimble thoughts, and vivid passions, and precarious glories, and strenuous deeds,—a perfect conflict of awful forces to him that is within it; but to the eye of waking truth outside, still and passive as the sculptured slumber of a marble image; a casket of mimic battles and ideal woes. With the particular sources of fallacy in this scheme, I have not now any direct concern. I merely wish to point out that, as it is destructive of any proper *Agency* in the human being, it annihilates at once merit and demerit; sinks man from a *person* into a *thing*; loses all moral distinctions, by representing character as an incident in one's lot, like health or disease, the colour of the hair or the robustness of the limbs; and renders *obligation* altogether impossible. And so, along with the inflation of self-righteousness, which it certainly excludes, this scheme carries away also the healthful sorrows of remorse. Its humility is not the moral consciousness of unworthiness of character, but the physical sense of incapacity of nature; and the disciple looks on himself, not as the fallen angel, but as the ennobled animal.

Now, with all this Christianity appears to me to stand in strongest contrast. It annihilates merit, not by reducing obligation to nothing, but by raising it to infinitude. Leaving us the originating causes of our own acts, as we had always supposed ourselves to be,—confirm-

ing us fully in the partnership we thus enjoy with the creative energy of God,—it resists all encroachment on our responsibility. But then it takes away from us the *other* element of merit. It renders it impossible for our performance to overlap and exceed the claims upon our will. For, it changes the relations in which, with a conscience simply looking round over the level of our equals, we had felt ourselves to stand. Putting us *under Heaven* as well as *upon the earth*, within the presence and sanctuary of God, while we are at the hearths of our friends and in the streets with our fellows, it swallows up our duties to them in one immense sphere of duty to him. Into all our transactions with them, it introduces a new and awful partner, to whom we cannot say, ‘Thou hast no business between them and us; if we satisfy each other, stand thou aloof!’ As the holy prompter of *our* conscience, and guardian of *their* claims, he must be omnipresent with his interpositions. To him therefore our religion makes over all their rights; and thereby not only consecrates and preserves them, but gives them boundless extension. Instantly, we discern as a true demand upon us, a thousand things which before we had fancied to be at our discretion, and to redound to our praise, if we conceded them. Charity merges into justice; love and pity are offerings that may not be withheld; and every former gift becomes a debt. All good that is not impossible is a thing now due, and is to be performed, not like eye-service unto men, but as to God: a solemn transfer of responsibilities has taken place, and all our doings are with the Highest now: and, beyond his acknowledged rights we can never go,

so as to deserve anything of him. Towards him obligation is strictly infinite : it covers all our *possibilities of achievement* : for, the very circumstance of any good and noble thing *being possible*, and *revealed to our hearts as such*, constitutes and creates it a duty. Thus suggested, it is one of the trusts committed to us by God,—the work which he, the great spiritual Artificer, puts into his true labourer's hands to execute : to keep the material, and not weave the texture, of his designs, were a false and unfaithful thing. Nor, when we have completed it, can we establish any title to even the most insignificant reward. For, what are wages after all? Are they not, in effect, the labourer's share of the produce created, only paid in anticipation of the finished task,—*an advance* founded on his right to subsist while he toils? And do they not cancel all his claim to participate afterwards in the product of his skill? This perpetual loan by which he lives, and which he works off by exertion ever renewed, he cheerfully accepts in discharge of all his rights. And what recompenses are ever prepaid so freely as those of God? He waits not for a week's, not even for a moment's industry, but is beforehand with us every way. We have never earned *the living* which he gives us in this world : we cannot plead that we have a right to be. The field and the faculty of work are alike furnished forth by him. A little while ago, and we were not here ; a little while again, and we shall be gone from our place : and have we not then been wholly set up at our post in this universe by our great Task-master? and does he not, by the fact of existence itself, make us his perpetual debtors?

Yes : the successive moments, as they pass, are the counters of his constant payment ; which we can neither reckon nor refuse, but only hasten to seize and to employ. And so, it is impossible for us ever to overtake his advances. With our fastest speed they fly before us still, like the shadow which his light behind us casts, only lengthening as we go, till it stretches over the brink of time, and covers the abyss of eternity. Resign we then every high pretension, and stand with bended and uncovered head of self-renunciation ; grateful for every blessing God may send ; eager for all the work he may appoint ; but saying, when all is done, “ we are unprofitable servants ; we have done that ” alone,—and, alas ! far less, “ which it was our duty to do.”

## XIV.

### THE CHILD'S THOUGHT.

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1 CORINTHIANS XIII. 11.

WHEN I WAS A CHILD, I SPAKE AS A CHILD, I UNDERSTOOD AS A CHILD, I THOUGHT AS A CHILD ; BUT WHEN I BECAME A MAN, I PUT AWAY CHILDISH THINGS.

THE noblest prophets and apostles have been children once ; lisping the speech, laughing the laugh, thinking the thought of boyhood. Undistinguished as Paul then was amid the crowd, unless by more earnest and confiding eye, there was something passing within him of which, it would seem, he preserved, in the kindling moments of his manly soul, the memory and the trace. And there are few men, I suppose, who do not at times send back a gentle glance into their early days ; not only looking upon faces vanished now, and listening to voices that have become as distant music to the mind ; but remembering the throbbing pulse of their own hopes, the strain of heroic purpose, and the awful step of wonder unabated yet. Between ourselves and the apostle, however, there is an expressive difference here. We usually turn from the past with a sigh, and a secret sense of irrevocable loss : he, with hands clasped in thanksgiving, as in the glory of an in-

finite gain. We envy our own children; and would fain put back the shadow on our dial, to feel again the morning sun that shines so softly upon them: he springs with glad escape out of hours too recent from the night, and welcomes the increasing glow of an eternal day. To us, the chief beauty, the only sanctities of life, are apt to appear in the shelter of our early years: they are like a home that we have deserted, a love that we have lost, a faith cheated from our hearts. As we ascend the mountain-chain of life, so long a towering mystery to our uplifted eye, they lie beneath as the green hollow of the Alpine valley: to whose native fields, return is cut off forever; whence the incense of our faith went up straight to heaven, like the first smoke from the village hearths into the clear, calm air; whose sunny grass thaws the very heart of us, nipped by the glacier's keenest breath; whose stately trees, still dotting the ground with points of shade, seem to leave us more exposed amid the scant and stunted growths of this wintry height; and whose church-peal, floating faintly on the ear, makes us shudder all the more at the bleak winds near, booming in icy caverns, or whispering to the plains of silent snow. But Paul, though not untouched perhaps by the poetry of childhood, regarded it without regret. With him, its inspiration had risen, not declined; its unconscious heaven had not retreated, but pressed closer on his heart, till it had mingled with his nature, and articulately spoken to itself. He was not going up into life to lose himself amid the relentless elements, and get buried by the avalanche of years in chasms of Fate; but, to conquer

Nature and look down ; to stand upon her higher and higher watch-towers, till he found a way clear into the climate of the skies ; and, like Moses on Mount Nebo, with "his eye not dim," could discern, at the pointing of God, "the whole land" of life "unto the utmost sea ;"—and then pass where no horizon bounds the view. We, too often, in putting away childish things, part with the wrong elements ; losing the heavenly insight, keeping the earthly darkness. We put away the guileless mind, the pure vision, the simple trust, the tender conscience ; and reserve the petty scale of thought, the hasty will, the love of toys and strife. Paul put away only the ignorance and littleness of childhood, bearing with him its freshness, its truth, its God, into the grand work of his full age. And hence, while our religion lies somewhere near our cradle and is a kind of sacred memory, his lived on to speak for itself instead of being talked about. It fought all his conflicts : it took the weight out of his chains ; it condensed the lightning of his pen ; and kindled the whole furnace of his glorious nature.

There is a natural difference between the religion of childhood, of youth, and of maturity, which appears to be very much overlooked in our expectations and practices with regard to each. The human mind is not the same in all periods of its history : its wants, its faculties, its affections, shift their relative proportions, as that history proceeds : and a power, which, like religion, is to hover over it continually, and to lift it by a constant attraction, must not always suspend itself over the same feelings, and offer one invariable representa-

tion. Its resources are infinite ; its beauty inexhaustible ; its truth dipped in every colour into which the light of heaven is broken by the prism of Thought : and it must adapt itself to the characteristics of every period which needs its sway. Nor is there the least art or cunning policy implied in this ; but only a soul of natural sympathy, to take on it at will the burthens of the child, the youth, the man ; to see their love, their fear, their admiration ; to doubt their doubts, and pray their prayers ; and simply to avoid the cruelty of offering the garment of grief to the spirit of joy, and singing songs to the heavy heart. Some features belonging to the early period of life, which should be borne in mind in the conduct of the religious element of education, I would briefly indicate.

Childhood is emphatically the period of safe instincts ; permitting it to try for awhile the unreflective life of creatures less than human. Only the ingenuity of artificial corruption can spoil them. In themselves, they are incapable of excess, and offer few temptations to wrong, that are not adequately counteracted by some balancing affection. They simply ask to be let alone, and suffer no perversion : give them room to open out ; use no premature compression to drive them back ; and they will check each other, and find a fairer proportion than can be given by your rules. In these shrewd days, in which it has become the cleverest thing to suspect the Devil everywhere, and God nowhere, it is thought romantic to believe in the innocence of childhood : pardonable perhaps in a woman, but an intolerable softness in a man. And possibly it is, if applied



to the actual children, once born in the image of God, but long ago twisted into our miserable likeness, by the sight of our luxuries, the contagion of our selfishness, the hearing of our lies : possibly it is, if applied to those whom the church teaches to blaspheme their own nature, to confess a sham guilt, and prate of an unreal rescue from an unfelt danger. For, the world is often right in fact, though wrong in truth : and the church has acted with a cunning theology in this matter ; having first spoiled all the children with its inanities, and then produced them in its court in evidence of original depravity. But if both World and Church will only learn what the child's simple presence may teach, instead of teaching what he cannot innocently learn, the truth may dawn upon them, that he seldom requires to be led,—only not to be *mised*. A reform in the nursery will change the creed of Christendom : no hierarchy can stand against it ; and the pinafore of the child will be more than a match for the frock of the bishop and the surplice of the priest. If it be romance to look with something of reverent affection at the being not yet remote from God, it is at least a romance that has come to us on a voice most full of grace and truth : it breathes fresh from the hills of Nazareth ; and its emblem is that wondering infant in the arms of Christ, visible thence over all the earth, as the chosen watch at the gate of heaven. Whatever be thought of this doctrine, it cannot be denied that there is, in early years, an openness to habit, which, while it quickly punishes our neglect, as quickly answers to our care. No ready-made obstruction, no ruined work, is given us to undo.

Wise direction alone is needed : and such frame-work and moulding for the life as we may advisedly construct, will receive the growing nature as its silent occupant. Nay, this is largely true, not only of the acts of the hand, but of the methods and persuasions of the mind : for childhood has a *ready faith*, that may be most blessedly used or most wickedly abused ; a faith so open to the sense of God, that almost unspoken, and as by look of holy sympathy, it may be given ; so eager, that it will seize on all the aliment of thought within its reach : so trustful, that it feels no difficulty, and will cause you none. Your problem of guidance will therefore be, not so much to evade present embarrassments, as to prevent the shock of *future* perplexities, that *must* arise, when finite thought attempts to grasp an infinite faith, and Reason descends to find its own ground, which it ever carries with it as it dives. Nor is there any positive way of avoiding such a crisis of the soul. Only, there is a negative wisdom in not shutting up the faith ; in *leaving a place* for future acquisitions, and verge enough for the larger operations of the mind. Meanwhile, one thing is to be immediately and always observed. Through the susceptibility of the religious principle, you may make the child *believe in* any God, from the Egyptian cat to the inspirer of Christ. But there is only one God that can really possess him with an awful love ; namely, such a one as seems to him the highest and the best. And of this there can be no constant conception through life : it changes as experience deepens, and affections open and die away. Yours cannot be the same as his : and if you speak

without sympathy, if you forget your different latitude of mind, you may repel rather than instruct, and give root to a choking thorn of hatred, instead of a fruitful seed of love. If the name of God is to be sweet and solemn to young hearts, it must stand for *their* highest, not for *ours*: and many a phrase, rich and deep in tone to us, must be shunned as sure to jar on spirits differently attuned. Oh! how many obstructions have not veracious men to remove ere they can find their true religion! How long do they say their prayers, before they pray, and hear and speak of holy things without a touch of worship! How many years did we look up into only damp, uncomfortable clouds, that did but wet and darken life, ere the pure breeze set in, and swept the curtain from the eternal sky, and mingled us with the genuine night, and set us eye to eye with the watchful stars! If when I thought as a child, I had also dared to speak as a child, should I not have said, "Talk to me no more; I hate the name of God?"—yet, not the God that ever lives and loves, but the stiff idol of the catechism, looking rigorous from the narrow niche of a decaying Puritanism. Not the God, whose kiss is in the light, whose gladness on the riding sea, whose voice upon the storm; who shapes the little grass, and hides in the forest, and rustles in the shower; who bends the rainbow, and blanches the snow: for children delight in nature, and from wonder at its beauty easily slide into adoration of its Lord. Not the God, who moulded the orbs that Newton weighed, and traced the curves he measured, and bended the colours he untwined; who was on the earth when no man was

and buried the tribes now dug from the mountains and the plains ; who thinks at this moment every thought that science shall develop, and reads the folded scroll of future history : for children delight in knowledge, and will kneel with joy to Him, with whom it is at once centred and diffused. Not certainly the God, who looked out upon our life and death, our strife and sorrow, through the soul of Christ ; who can no more abide the hypocrite and the unjust that walk the streets to-day, than Jesus the whited sepulchres of old ; who lets no widow's mite escape his eye, no grateful heart, though of the leper and the heretic, go without its praise : for children love justice, mercy, and truth, and will trust themselves freely to Him in whom they dwell beyond degree.

Nor is it only in its conception of God, that the faith of the child must differ from that of the man. Its moral element is also peculiar. To him religion, applied to life, presents itself exclusively as a *Law*,—and a law that there is no serious difficulty in *perfectly obeying*. Prescribing a clear scheme of duty, and a natural and delightful state of affection, it seems to him so simple and practicable, that he is full of courage, goes forth with joyous step, and with confiding look gazes straight upon the open countenance of the future. He cannot understand the penitential strains that float from the older world around him : what have these people been about, that they have so much evil to bewail ? They appear to him very worthy, nay altogether faithful and meritorious, Christians ; and it is very strange they should speak so grievously to God, and stand before

him with a culprit air and streaming tears. In all this, though it has no shadow of pretence, he cannot join: it comes of a deeper truth of nature than he yet has reached. His circle of life is narrow, and his idea of life lies quiet within it; the thing which he thinks in his conscience in the morning, he can do with sedulous hand before night. His conception of duty is legal and human only, not spiritual and divine: it has not yet burst into transcendent aspiration, whose infinite glory in front spreads the inseparable shadow of sorrow and ill behind. Sin therefore remains to him a dreadful image from some foreign world; a spectre of horrid witchery, whose incantations overflow from the cursing lips of bad men, and whose fires gleam from their impure eyes. But it is a thing that is preternatural still: he looks at it outside his nature, as haunting history and the world; it is not yet a sorrowful reality within. His religion therefore is a *cheerful reverence*; and with its sweet light no tinge should mix from the later solemnity and inner conflicts of faith. Let him take his vow with a glad voice: if you drive him prematurely to the confessional, you make him false. The matinhymn of life to God is brilliant with hope and praise: and, without violence to nature, you cannot displace it for the deep, low-breathing vesper-song: the rosy air of so fresh a time was never made to vibrate to that strain. Even from the stony heart of old Memnon on the waste, beams vivid as the morning wrung a murmur of *happy melody*: and only at the dip of day did a passing *plaint* float through the desert's stately silence. It is, I am persuaded, a fatal thing, when we men and

women, who make all the catechisms, and shape all the doctrines, and invent all the language of Christian faith, force our adult religion with its meditative depth, upon the heart of childhood, not yet capacious enough to take it in. Puritanism,—fit faith for the stalwart devotion of earnest manhood in grim times,—cannot be adapted to the childish mind; and the attempt to do so will inevitably produce distaste, and occasion reaction. This indeed we can hardly doubt is one great and permanent cause of the alternations observable from age to age, in the faith and spirit of communities; alternations from enthusiasm to indifference, from scepticism to mysticism, from the anxieties of moral law to the fervour of devout love, from a religion of excessive inwardness to one of outward rites or daily work. These changes, though often long in openly declaring themselves, really and at heart take place by generations. The true seat of the revolution is in the nursery and the school: the children being unable to receive what their fathers insist upon giving; getting gradually loosened from a thing that never held them in the hollow of its hand, but only detained them by the skirts of the garment; and obliged at last to begin anew, and try the power of faith's neglected pole.

As childhood merges into youth, the characteristics I have described undergo a rapid and momentous change. The early security is gone. The stronger powers demand a sterner police of conscience to maintain their peace and harmony. The whole soul displays,—in its intellect, its desires, its sentiments of duty,—the great transition from the natural to self-conscious

and reflective existence. A greater openness to beauty, a more spontaneous quickness of affection, a more plenary enthusiasm for goodness, combine to waken up unutterable aspirations, and put upon the countenance of life, as it gazes into the young eyes, an expression of divinest glory. New conditions are reached under which the simple, light-hearted piety cannot longer stay. Duty is more than the child's task-work now. So grand and awful does it rise, that it makes the actual deeds that lie beneath look small, like the cultured garden at the Andes' base. Hence, to even the most brave and buoyant spirit, the sigh that seemed once so strange is not unknown. There is an incipient experience of that sad interval between conception, now so rich, and execution still so poor, which traces the lines of deepest care upon the face of men ;—not however settled yet into that steady and wonderful shadow of guilt, which has spread over the purest and most strenuous souls of Christendom ; but coming fitfully and vanishing again ; taking its turn with the bold young faith that nothing worthy can be had to good resolve ; and only dashing the familiar joy with new longings and repentances. Amid the fiercer struggle that sets in, the great thing needed is strength of Moral *Denial*, the courage to say *No* to all questionable men and unquestionable fiends. Meanwhile, the very faculties of thought are changing too. The appetite for *facts* is passing into an eagerness for *truth*, full also of deep anxieties. Sometimes this noble passion degenerately tends to a disagreeable dogmatism, from the mind's having lost its childish source of trust, and not yet hav-

ing gained the manly, and for awhile holding the faith neither in meek dependence on authority, nor in genial repose on the universal Reason and Conscience, but by the little personal tenure of private argument. And sometimes, it is productive of dark agonies of doubt and loneliness, drearier than death; leaving the soul exposed upon the field of conflict, without a God to strive for, or a weapon for the fight. Happily, however, the moral struggle of this period comes before the mental; and is well over with the faithful, ere the needed strength is broken; and oftener than is guessed, I am convinced, it is the issue of the earlier battle of the Conscience, that really determines how the later strife of the Intellect shall end. Men that have lived a few years of hardness for God's sake, are rarely left by him to roam the wilds of doubt alone.

It is not much perhaps that direct and purposed teaching can contribute to the efficacy of the religious sentiments. But its happy avail, whatever it be, depends on its conformity with the conditions we have traced. If only we will not hinder, God has a providence most rich in help. Judge not the child's mind by your own; nor fancy that you have a religion to create against some powerful resistance, which skill is needed to evade or proof to overcome. His spirit, if unspoiled, is with you, not against you, when you speak of God. Faith is the natural and normal state of the human heart; doubt is its feverish disease: and that which may be the fit remedy for your sickness, may be the poison of his health. He needs but the fresh air and pure nourishment of life; give him not the phar-



macopœia of theology, instead of the bread of heaven. Disturb him not with unprofitable "Evidences:" they are burdensome as the statutes-at-large to the heart of spontaneous justice; misplaced as a Court of Chancery in Heaven. He has already the truth which, at best, they can only have prevented you from losing: it is not the tenure, but the scope, of his belief that is given you to improve. And in your efforts to enlarge it, it is well to proceed outwards rather than inwards; to awaken apprehensions of facts, more than reflection upon feelings; to glorify for the young disciple's eye the world around him, by lifting the veil from what is beautiful in nature and great in history; and not drive devotion back upon self-wonder and self-scrutiny. The attempt to elicit a religion by interrogating his consciousness, and to find in his heart all the mysteries of a metaphysical and moral experience, will end only with affectation in the appearance, and unsoundness at the very core, of his nature. The green fruit may be sweetened by confectionary arts; but the fermentation of the oven is not like the ripening of the sun; if it hastens the relish of the moment, it kills the seed of future hope. Scarcely need the child *know* that he has a soul; it is ours to take care that, when at length he finds it, it shall be a noble and august discovery; full of admirations never to be superseded, and of love that shall bring no repentance. For this end, his teaching should be mainly external and objective; given with an eye ever fixed on the true good which he most readily discerns to be great and sacred. Let Palestine be to him, as to so many ages it has been, a Holy Land; and Je-

sus, in his gentle majesty, the fixed and realized representative of God ; and the high deeds and souls of the past be claimed as the expressions of his will ; and opening glimpses be afforded into that natural universe which he rules in the spirit of the divine Nazarene. Yet withal, the exigencies of a more advanced age, though not anticipated, need not be forgotten. Some prospective regard may be had to the reflective years which will bring their wants at length ; and without teaching any present Theory of Religion, its future demands may be remembered in a thousand ways. If you would prepare, not a mere baby-house, but a right-noble structure of faith, in which the soul shall have a life-interest, you will not only lay the foundation broad and deep, but avoid filling in with mean and perishable materials the parts, of which the childish eye may see the surface, but which only the manly thought can build in strength. The unnoticed outline of system may be so drawn, that painful and deforming erasures hereafter may be spared : and by mere expansion of the old boundary, and insertion of new beauty and new wealth, the earnest veracity of the philosopher may be but the glorified piety of the child. As larger views of the universe and life are opened out, a Providence will be felt to abide there still : the laws which are detected, the unsuspected grandeur that is revealed, will be entered in some orderly manner, as parts of the mighty scheme ; and, instead of subverting the central and divine authority, will be but a province added to its sway. And as the years of deep and subjective religion come, and the mind sinks in wonder before its own mysteries, the

self-consciousness, as it wakes and starts up, will on the instant see God standing in the midst. Such at least is the *tendency* of instruction wisely given. Still we must remember that religion is after all beyond the range of mere tuition. It is not a didactic thing that words can give, and silence can withhold. It is a spirit ; a life ; an aspiration ; a contagious glory from soul to soul ; a spontaneous union with God. Our inward unfaithfulness is sure to extinguish it ; our outward policy cannot produce it. To love and to do the Holy Will is the ultimate way, not only to know the truth, but to lead others to know it too.

## XV.

### LOOKING UP, AND LIFTING UP.

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ROMANS XV. 1. 3.

**WE THEN THAT ARE STRONG OUGHT TO BEAR THE INFIRMITIES OF THE WEAK, AND NOT TO PLEASE OURSELVES:—FOR EVEN CHRIST PLEASED NOT HIMSELF.**

In the grouping of nature, dissimilar things are invariably brought together, and by serving each other's wants and furnishing the complement to each other's beauty, present a whole more perfect than the sum of all the parts. The world we live in is not a cabinet of curiosities, in which every kind of thing has an assortment of its own, labelled with its exclusive characters, and scrupulously separated from objects of kindred tribe. The free creative hand distributes its riches by other order than the formal arrangements of a museum; and, for the happy life and action of the universe, blends a thousand things, which, for ends of knowledge only, would be kept apart. A single natural object may be the focus of all human studies, and present problems to puzzle a whole congress of the wise. A tropical mountain, for instance, is a seat for all the sciences; and from the snows of its summit to the ocean at its base, ranges

through every realm of the physical world, and presents samples of the objects and forces peculiar to each. Its granite masses stand up as the monumental trophy of nature's engineering ; while each successive stratum piled around their pedestal is as a notch on the score and chronicle of her operations. Its melting glaciers and its poised clouds keep her chemical register ; showing the temperature of her laboratory, and marking the dew-point every hour. And from the lichen and the moss that paint its upper rocks, through the fields and forests of its slope, to the sea-weeds that cling around its roots, it carries gradations of vegetable and animal life more various than can be told by the most accomplished physiologist. And perhaps from some platform on its side the observatory may be raised ; whence the astronomer obtains his glimpse at other regions of creation, surveys the lordly estate of the Sun of whom our holding is, and espies the realm of space beyond, where worlds lie thick as forest-leaves. In this, we have only a representation of the harmonising method of creation everywhere, which combines the most unlike things into a perfect unity. The several *kingdoms* of nature, as we term them, are not like our political empires, enclosed with jealous boundaries, thick with commercial barriers, and bristling with military posts. They pervade and penetrate each other : they form together an indissoluble economy ; the mineral subduing itself into a basis for the organic, the vegetable supporting the animal, the vital culminating in the spiritual ; weak things clinging to the strong, as the moss to the oak's trunk, and the insect to its leaf ; death acting as the purveyor

of life, and life playing the sexton to death. Mutual service in endless gradation is clearly the world's great law.

In the natural grouping of human life, the same rule is found. It is not *similarity* but *dissimilarity*, that constitutes the qualification for heartfelt union among mankind: and the mental affinities resemble the electric, in which like poles repel, while the unlike attract. A family,—than which there is no more genuine type of nature's method of arrangement,—is throughout a combination of *opposites*; the woman depending on the man,—whose very strength however exists only by her weakness; the child hanging on the parent,—whose power were no blessing, were it not compelled to stoop in gentleness; the brother protecting the sister—whose affections would have but half their wealth, were they not brought to lean on him with trustful pride: and even among seeming equals, the impetuous quieted by the thoughtful, and the timid finding shelter with the brave. That there “are diversities of gifts” is the reason why there “is one spirit:” and it is because one is reliable for knowledge, and another for resolve, and a third for the graces of a balanced mind, that *all* are held in the bonds of a pure affection.

The same principle distinguishes natural Society from artificial Association. The former, springing from the impulse of human feeling, brings together elements that are unlike: the latter, directed to specific ends, combines the like. The one, completing defect by redundancy, and compensating redundancy by defect, produces a real and living unity: the other, multiplying a

mere fraction of life by itself, retires further and further from any integral good, and results only in exaggerated partiality. I do not suppose that society arises, as some philosophers represent, from the sense of individual weakness, and the desire for consolidated strength ; but, it must be owned, the instinctive propensities of mankind create nearly the same natural classes, as if it were so. The first social group would contain a selection of the elements least able to subsist apart, and most compact when thrown into a system. We all look with involuntary admiration on the gifts and excellences which are wanting in ourselves : and so, ignorance is drawn to knowledge, and artlessness resorts to skill ; thought is astonished at the achievements of action, and action wonders at the mysteries of thought ; the irresolute trust the courageous, and all find a refuge in the noble and the just. So long as personal qualities and spontaneous attractions determine the sorting of mankind, they will dispose themselves in classes, containing each, in rugged harmony, the elementary materials of our humanity. And when discord arises, it is from the presence of too many similar elements, which have no respect for one another, no mutual want, no reciprocal helpfulness, and which cannot therefore coexist without risk of dissension. Say what you will, nature is no democrat, but filled throughout with ranks : and it is only in proportion as we recede from the natural affections, and enter upon the life of isolated self-will, that dreams of social equality take place of the reality of social obedience.

Now the assortments of an old civilization follow a law precisely the reverse of that which we have ascribed

to the Providential rule. It unites all elements that are like, and separates the unlike. Instead of throwing men into harmonious groups, it analyses them into distinct classes ; conferring upon each sort of human being a kind of charter of incorporation ; giving them something of a collective will, a feeling for their order, and a conscious pursuit of its special ends. The mutual dependence of differently endowed men is not indeed destroyed or even lessened ; but it is shifted from the individual to the class. Where, before, person was helpful to person, nation now supplies the want of nation, and one mass of labour fills up the deficiency of another. This makes the greatest difference in the whole moral structure of human life. The contact of the dissimilar elements, I need not say, is much less close : vast circles, embracing collections of men, hang upon one another ; but not the people within them, taken one by one. The daily life of each is passed in the presence, not of his *unequals*, but of his *equals*. He lives within his class : he mixes with those who have much that he possesses, and little that he wants ; and who in their turn want little that he can give, and much of which he is empty. He finds his own feelings repeated, his own tastes confirmed, his own judgments defended, his own type of wisdom reproduced ; and becoming an adept in the characteristics of his order, he misses the perfection of his nature. He is esteemed in proportion as he exaggerates the peculiarities of his class ; and he ceases to be its model and its idol, the moment he seeks to infuse into it the elements of some foreign wisdom, and treats with respect the depository



of some opposing truth. How completely this association by sympathy has taken place of association by difference, is plain to all who look upon the world with open eyes. Only those who are of the same sect, of equal rank, of one party, of kindred pursuit, of pretty equal knowledge, and concurrent tastes, are found often in the same society. In education, the graduated distribution of nature is entirely broken up ; all the boys collected into one set, all the girls into another ; and the several ages, combined in the system of Providence, are separated by the arrangements of man. Everywhere, mechanism and economy are substituting, over our world, the classifications of an encampment for the organism of a home.

I am far from supposing that all this is entirely evil. It is a noble distinction of civilized above barbarous man, that he can bear the habitual presence of others like himself, without a coercion always suspended over his passions ; can sympathize with them, and join in hearty fraternity for common ends of good. To live among our equals teaches, without doubt, the two-fold lesson of self-reliance and self-restraint : it enforces a respect for others' rights, and a vigilant guardianship of our own : it substitutes prudence for impulse ; and trains the sentiments of justice and veracity. But, while it invigorates the energies of purpose, it is apt to blight the higher graces of the mind ; and, in confirming the moralities of the will, to impair the devoutness of the affections. A man always among his equals is like the school-boy at his play ; whose eager voice, and disputatious claim, and bold defiance of the wrong, and merciless derision

of the feeble, betray that self-will is wide awake, and pity lulled to sleep. But see the same child in his home : and the genial laugh, the deferential look, the hand of generous help, the air of cheerful trust, show how, with beings above and others beneath him, he can forget himself in gentle thoughts and quiet reverence. And so it is with us all. The world is not given to us as a playground or a school alone, where we may learn to fight our way upon our own level, and leave others scope for a fair race ; but as a domestic system, surrounding us with weaker souls for our hand to succour, and stronger ones for our hearts to serve. If the one set of relations are needful for the formation of manly qualities, it is the other that gives occasion to the divine. And if in our own day and our own class, the moral and intellectual elements of character have become completely and deplorably ascendant over the religious ; if, in our honour for truth and justice as realities, we have got to think all piety a dream ; if life, in becoming a vigorous work, has ceased to be a holy worship ; if its tasks are done, and its mysteries forgotten, and in being occupied by our Will it is emptied of our God ; if, in the better rule of our finite lot, we forget to serve its Infinite Disposer ; —it is, in part, because we live too exclusively with our equals ; the weak herding with the weak, the strong meeting with the strong ; the rich surrounding themselves with the rich, and the taught fearing the more taught. We associate with those who think our thought, feel our feelings, live our life : we read the books which repeat our tastes, justify our opinions, confirm our admirations : we encourage each other in laughing at the

excellence to which we are blind, and disbelieving the truth to which we have never opened our reason, and shuffling away from the affections and obligations to which we have a distate. And thus our existence shrinks into a miserable egoism: the theatre on which we stand is surrounded by mirrors of self-repetition; and we render it impossible to escape the monotonous variety of the poor personal image.

Now, to break this degrading moral illusion, we have only to study and adopt the grouping of the Christian life: which corrects the classifications of our artificial state by restoring the arrangements of nature. The faith of Christ throws together the unlike ingredients which civilization had sifted out from one another. Every true church reproduces the unity which the world had dissolved: and for the precarious cohesion of similar elements substitutes again the attraction of dissimilar. This is done not merely by placing us all, as responsible agents, in the same venerable relations, and so strengthening the bonds of earnest brotherhood. This also is a noble and humanizing thing. But Christianity has other influences operating to the same end. The moment a man becomes a *disciple*, his exclusive self-reliance vanishes: the rigid lines of his mere manly posture become softened: he trusts another than himself: he loves a better spirit than his own; and, while living in what is human, aspires to what is divine. And in this new opening of a world above him, a fresh light comes down upon the world beneath him: the infinite glory of the heaven reveals the infinite sadness there is on earth. Standing no longer on his own level, as if

that were all, he feels himself in the midst, between a higher existence to which he would attain, and a lower to which he would give help. Aspiration and pity rush into his heart from opposite directions: he forgets himself: the stiff strong footing taken by his will gives way; and he is mellowed into the attitudes of *looking up* and *lifting up*. These, it always appears to me, are the two characteristic postures of the Christian life; without which our minds, whatever their opinions, are empty of all religious element, and our hearts, though still humane, lie withered in atheistic death. If there were no *ranks* of souls within our view; if all were upon a platform of republican equality; if there were but a uniform *citizenship* of spirits, and no royalty of goodness, and no slavery to sin; if nothing unutterably great subdued us to allegiance, and nothing sad and shameful roused us to compassion;—I believe that all divine truth would remain entirely inaccessible to us, and our existence would be reduced to that of intelligent and amiable animals: the noblest chamber of the soul, the vault of its hidden worship, remaining locked, the corresponding region of the universe, the hiding place of thunder—the secret dwelling of the Almighty,—would be closed against our most penetrating suspicions. And as the arrangements by which we stand—members of a graduated series,—with beings above and beings below, is the origin of faith; so is the practical recognition of this position the great means of feeding the perpetual fountains of the Christian life.

A great German poet and philosopher was fond of defining religion, as consisting in a reverence for *infe-*

rior beings. The definition is paradoxical : but though it does not express the *essence* of religion, it assuredly designates one of its *effects*. True, there could be no reverence for lower natures, were there not, to begin with, the recognition of a Supreme Mind : but the moment that recognition exists, we certainly look on all that is beneath with a different eye. It becomes an object, not of pity and protection only, but of sacred respect ; and our sympathy, which had been that of a humane fellow-creature, is converted into the deferential help of a devout worker of God's will. And so, *the loving service of the weak and wanting* is an essential part of the discipline of the Christian life. Some habitual association with the poor, the dependent, the sorrowful, is an indispensable source of the highest elements of character. If we are faithful to the obligations which such contact with infirmity must bring ; if we gently take the trembling hand that seeks our guidance, and spend the willing care, and exercise the needful patience ;—why, it makes us descend into healthful depths of sorrowful affection which else we should never reach : it first teaches us what it is to wear this nature of ours, and shows us that we have been men and have not known it. It strips off the thick bandages of self, and the grave-clothes of custom ; and bids us awake to a life which first reveals to us the death-like insensibility from which we are emerging. Yes ; and even if we are unfaithful to our trust ; if we have let our negligence have fatal way ; if sorrows fall on some poor dependent charge, from which it was our broken purpose to shield his head ;—still, it is good that we have

known him, and that his presence has been with us. Had we hurt a *superior*, we should have expected his punishment: had we offended an *equal*, we should have looked for his displeasure: and, these things once endured, the crisis would have been past. But to have injured the *weak*, who must be dumb before us, and look up with only the lines of grief which we have traced;—this strikes an awful anguish into our hearts: a cloud of divine Justice broods over us, and we expect from God the punishment which there is no man to give. The rule of heavenly equity gathers closer to us than before; and we that had neglected mercy are brought low to ask it. Thus it is that the weak, the child, the outcast, they that have none to help them, raise up an Infinite protector on their side, and by their very wretchedness sustain the faith of Justice ever on the throne.

The other half of Christian discipline is of a less sad and more inspiring kind; and yet scarcely more welcome to the vain and easy and self-complacent heart. There are those who pass through life with no greater care than to keep in good humour with themselves; who dislike the spectacle of anything that greatly moves or visibly reproaches them; who therefore shun those that know more, see deeper, aim higher, than themselves; who are ever on the search, not for correction of their errors, but for confirmation of their prejudices: not for rebukes to their littleness, but for praises of their greatness; and who hurry away from the uneasiness of self-confession, if it ever begins to flow, amid the mists of

self-justification. This form of selfishness may not be utterly inconsistent with the duty on which I have insisted, of lifting up the beings beneath us ; but it is the direct contrary of the other portion of the devout life, which consists in *looking up* to all that is above us. It is the more needful to guard against the approach of such a temper, because aspiration is more easily stifled than compassion. Its faint breathings subside through mere forgetfulness : but the paroxysms of pity can be quelled only by an active selfishness : and admiration may die from dearth of objects, while sympathy is in danger rather of exhaustion by their multitude. The intercourse with suffering which sustains the natural spirit of mercy is so near our doors, as hardly to be avoided without compunction : the intercourse with excellence which keeps resolution at its height is a privilege so rare as not to be attained without an effort. Yet without it, the higher elements of the Christian life must fatally decline. The soul cannot permanently feed from its own fuel its nobler fires : it needs at least some stream of pure air from aloft to kindle the smouldering thoughts, and make the clouds of doubt and heaviness burst into a flame. Only the fewest and sublimest natures,—bordering almost on the perfectness of Christ,—can remain in the perpetual presence, though for ends of genuine mercy, of infirm or depraved humanity, without a lowering of the moral conceptions, and a depression of hope and faith. And by a natural retribution, through which God rebukes every partial unfaithfulness, and forbids any spiritual grace perma-

nently to grow without the concurrent culture of them all, the tone of pity itself must gradually sink under this deterioration ; and every loss from the enthusiasm of a just devotion brings a duller shade on the light of human love. Hence, the anxiety of every one, in proportion to the noble earnestness with which he looks on life, to hold himself in unbroken communion with great and good minds ; never to depart long from the touch of their thought and the witness of their career ; but to intermingle some divine light of beauty thence with the prosaic story of his days. He knows that the upper springs of his affections must soon be dry, unless he asks the clouds to nourish them. He finds that the near inspection and familiar converse of wise and holy men is the appointed way by which the Infinite God lifts us to himself, and draws us upward with perpetual attraction. They are the mediators between the earth and heaven, between human realities and divine possibilities, between the severities of duty and the peace of God ; compelling us to own, how glorious when done are things most difficult to do ; how surely the dreams of conscience may become the fixed products of history ; and how from the sighs of achievement may be composed the hymn of thanksgiving. If, therefore, "there be any virtue, if there be any praise," whoever would complete the circle of the Christian life will "think on these things : " will thrust aside the worthless swarm of competitors on his attention ; in his reading will exclusively retain, in his living associations will never wholly lose, his close communion with the few lofty and faith-



ful spirits that glorify our world: and, above all, will at once quench and feed his thirst for highest wisdom, by trustful and reverent resort to Him in whom sanctity and sorrow, the divine and the human, mingled in ineffable combination.

## XVI.

### THE CHRISTIAN TIME-VIEW.

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1 CORINTHIANS VII. 29. 31. 32.

BUT THIS I SAY, BRETHREN, THE TIME IS SHORT:—THE FASHION OF THIS WORLD PASSETH AWAY.—I WOULD HAVE YOU WITHOUT CAREFULNESS.

PAUL said this with a meaning which cannot now be restored to the words, and which makes them one of the grandest expressions of the true Christian mind. In no vague, indeterminate sense, such as ours, did he declare the remainder of this life "*short*:" and we should much misunderstand his feeling here, if we took it for a common-place sigh over the brief lodgment permitted to man on earth. It was not that he thought the natural term of our presence upon this scene too slight for earnest pursuit, and resolute achievement: not that he preached any sickly and selfish indifferentism, esteeming our days too transient for love, and our generation too perishable for faithful service. He had no idea that the natural term would be completed, or the generation run itself out. Yet he felt assured that he and his disciples would be survivors of its destruction; and so, urges on them pursuits of immeasurable

amplitude, love of a passionless depth, and the service of none but eternal obligations. Instead of thinking, as any man might do, 'Frail tenants are we of this solid globe,—phantoms that come and vanish; leaving nothing permanent but the forms of human things, which remain while the beings change, and the scene over which we are passed, like troops of successive apparitions;'—the apostle says, 'My friends, we should be of quiet heart; we alone are immortal amid perishable things, and among the vain shows of creation remain, the realities of God: this world, though it seems like rooted adamant, is melting, like a painted cloud away; the forms of human life, the structure of communities, the instinctive relations of mankind, which alone appear unchangeable, are alone about to cease: and our individual being, of all things seeming the most precarious, is alone incapable of death.' Paul actually looked around him with the persuasion, that the stable products of history by which he was environed, the gigantic institutions, the proud traditions, the accumulated wealth, the disciplined force, the heartless slavery, that lay within the grasp of Roman power, existed by a feebleness of tenure than the sickliest infant's life: he looked to see them all, and the mighty arm that held them, crumble into sand before his eyes. A strange and wondrous expectation this, seen from our point of view! Afloat upon the tide of human things, in that poor frail skiff of a Christian Church which he took to be an ark of God, how could he look at such frowning skies, and hope to ride the storm alone? But, in truth, it was no *common tempest* that he thought to see: rather did he

sail on in the belief, that the very seas of time beneath him were about to sink and flee away ; bearing with them the mighty fleet of human things into nothingness and night ; and leaving only that ark suspended in the mid-heaven of God's protection, to grow into a diviner world. Well might he exhort his disciples to disentangle themselves from the elements about to perish ; to disregard the perils, and forget the toils, and transcend the anxieties, that beset them. Well might he remind them that they were living upon a scale, that made it shameful to brood on these things like an eager and wayward child ; that they might live in obedience to their largest thoughts, and compute their way as through the first spaces of an infinite perspective ; and that, to minds so placed, nothing was so fitting as a serene spirit of power ; quiet, not from the extinction, but from the doubling of emotion, gathering into the same instant the feelings of opposite times, and making " those that weep as though they wept not, and those that rejoice as though they rejoiced not, and those that used this world as though they used it not ;" and all, reposing " without carefulness" on the will of God, seeing how soon " the fashion of this world passeth away."

This was the Apostle's manner of regarding life : and though we may say his expectation was false, we may doubt whether any man since has had one half as true. It is, at all events, unlike the error of our lower spirits, and arises from a mind, not too *short-sighted*, but too *far-seeing*, for the conditions of our mortal state. It rightly answers the great problem between true and

false religion,—I should rather say between religion and no religion,—‘ *Which* is the permanent reality, Life, or the scenery and receptacle of life ; the Soul, or the physical Objects of the soul ?’ Whoever deeply feels that one of these is eternal, must see the other to be evanescent : for, the duration of either is simply relative to the other, which is its only measure : the elongation of the one is to us the abbreviation of the other ; and he who takes an absolute stand of faith on the stability of either, beholds the other passing into nought. To dull and heavy souls,—nay, to the lower minds of all men,—nothing seems so *real* as the objects of the senses, nothing so secure as the material forms of nature, to which from the first every human life has stood related ; and in proportion as physical science confirms this habit of thought, in proportion as masses and weights and mechanism engage us, or the laws of organization, or the outward conditions of social life, are we oppressed by the solid sameness of these things ; individual existence seems the sport of a dead fatalism, swallowed up by the hunger of an insatiable necessity. To souls like that of Paul, not passive and recipient, but vivid and productive,—souls that put all things into different attitudes by a pure act of meditation, and feel how the universe approaches or recedes before the changing eye of thought,—its constancy, nay its reality, seems purely relative : it lies submissive at the feet, like storm and calm before the eye of Christ : the primary force of God’s creation appears to be the free spontaneous soul ; whose existence is the great miracle and *mystery* of Heaven : whose tendency is ever towards a

higher life ; which communes through the screen of outward things with the inner mind of God, feeling both spirits immortal, and only the veil between condemned to drop away. And just in proportion as the worshipper stands up before Eternity face to face, and feels it there, must this earth and its time-relations shrink beneath his feet, till he rests upon a point that soon will vanish. Paul, wholly absorbed in the immensity of existence, could by no means measure the objects of existence by our finite rules : the depth of his perspective put even distant things into his foreground ; and if this be chronological error, it comes in with the shadow of religious truth : the delusion is scarce distinguishable from the inspiration of the prophet, and is even akin to the perception of God. No one could thus look the earthly into nothing, but by filling all things with the divine.

It was not then, I conceive, the historical misapprehension about the end of the world, that led to the belief of human immortality : it was the intensity of the belief in immortality, that produced the idea of the approaching end of the world. This is apparent in a way by which you may always distinguish a primitive from a derivative doctrine : the former is everywhere assumed, and appears as an all-pervading and unconscious *faith* ; the latter is frequently argued and expounded, and appears as an avowed *opinion*. The combination of the two, however, has had important effects on the development of our religion ; and it may be doubted whether without it, Christendom could ever have taken to heart that solemn sense of the infinite

scale of human life, which is the great characteristic of its theory of existence. Paul kept a whole generation of the church in awful and breathless suspense ; listening for the approaching peal of doom, till earthly sounds fell as faint unrealities upon their ear ; straining their vision aloft, as through a long watch-night, for the sign of the Son of Man in heaven ; till their footing seemed loosened beneath them, and the landscape sank into the dark away. Thus alone, I believe, could the invisible world be raised into the great reality to man. The first age of Christendom, sequestered from all else, and spent on its very front, obtained a divine insight that has not been lost. The heavenly breath that swept across the margin, made it felt how the heats of the present should be cooled, and the fever of the passions purified. Our poor minds can take in only one great conception at a time, and must be left alone with it for a full lifetime, if it is to be incorporated with the character, and ennoble the history, of succeeding ages. Moreover, great religious faiths must be the visible basis of practical life to one period, ere they can be rooted in the acceptance of another : and had not the early Christians watched their hour for Christ, their fellow-disciples ever after would have fallen asleep in the fatigues of this world, deaf to the voice of its divinest sorrows, and missing the angels of preternatural strength. The superstition therefore of one age may become the truth and guidance of all others.

That Christianity did really give an infinite enlargement to the scale of human life, and that this is one of *its great features*, is conspicuous enough on comparing

it with the religions it supplanted. It was not indeed that Pagan societies were without the conception of a future : but Christianity first got it cordially believed. Even the meditative philosophy of Greece can present no clear instances of hearty and deep conviction, except in Plato and his master ; and, whatever we may think of the rhetorical leanings of Cicero in the same direction, the practical earnestness of Rome was wholly given up, for want of higher thoughts, to material interests and outward magnificence. The faint and spectral fancies of a possible future, that floated before the mind of the people, scared away no crime, tranquillized no passion, disenchanted no instant pleasure. They lay fevered and restless beneath the broad, burning orb of this immediate life, drunk with hot indulgence, and asleep to the midnight hemisphere of faith open to the vigils of the purer soul. Throughout Christendom, on the other hand, this boundless night-scene of existence has been the great object of contemplation ; has swallowed up the day ; has reduced the meridian glare of life to an exaggerated star-light, truly seen as such from more central positions where the apparent does not distort the real. The difference between the ancient and modern world is this ; that in the one the great reality of being was *now* ; in the other, it is *yet to come*. If you would witness a scene characteristic of the popular life of old, you must go to the amphitheatre of Rome, mingle with its 80,000 spectators, and watch the eager faces of Senators and people : observe how the masters of the world spend the wealth of conquest, and indulge the pride of power : see every wild creature that God



has made to dwell from the jungles of India to the mountains of Wales, from the forests of Germany to the deserts of Nubia, brought hither to be hunted down in artificial groves by thousands in an hour : behold the captives of war, noble perhaps and wise in their own land, turned loose amid yells of insult more terrible for their foreign tongue, to contend with brutal gladiators trained to make death the favorite amusement, and present the most solemn of individual realities as a wholesale public sport : mark the light look with which the multitude, by uplifted finger, demands that the wounded combatant be slain before their eyes : notice the troop of Christian martyrs awaiting, hand in hand, the leap from the tiger's den : and when the day's spectacle is over, and the blood of two thousand victims stains the ring, follow the giddy crowd as it streams from the vomitories into the street, trace its lazy course into the forum, and hear it there scrambling for the bread of private indolence doled out by the purse of public corruption ; and see how it suns itself to sleep in the open ways, or crawls into foul dens, till morning brings the hope of games and merry blood again ;—and you have an idea of the Imperial people, and their passionate living for the moment, which the gospel found in occupation of the world. And if you would fix in your thought an image of the popular mind of Christendom, I know not that you could do better than go at sunrise with the throng of toiling men to the hill-side where Whitfield or Wesley is about to preach. Hear what a great heart of reality in that hymn that swells upon the morning air,—a prophet's strain upon a people's lips ! See

the rugged hands of labour, clasped and trembling, wrestling with the Unseen in prayer! Observe the uplifted faces, deep-lined with hardship and with guilt, streaming now with honest tears, and flushed with earnest shame, as the man of God awakes the life within, and tells of him that bare for us the stripe and the cross, and offers the holiest spirit to the humblest lot, and tears away the veil of sense from the glad and awful gates of heaven and hell. Go to these people's homes, and observe the decent tastes, the sense of domestic obligations, the care for childhood, the desire of instruction, the neighbourly kindness, the conscientious self-respect; and say, whether the sacred image of duty does not live within those minds: whether *holiness* has not taken the place of *pleasure* in their idea of life: whether for them too the toils of nature are not lightened by some eternal hope, and their burthen carried by some angel of love, and the strife of necessity turned into the service of God. The present tyrannizes over their character no more, subdued by a future infinitely great: and hardly though they lie upon the rock of this world, they can live the life of faith; and while the hand plies the tools of earth, keep a spirit open to the skies.

There is something very ennobling to human character in the possession of a large *Time-view*: and its effects are visible in many cases not directly religious. Next to having a noble future before us, is it well to have a wide and worthy past. This it is that renders the old man venerable. His actual momentary life is often poor and sad enough: the windows of sense and soul shut on the light and stir of the world without, and the ave-

nues choked up through which the interests and passions of the hour should vibrate to his heart. But, while shaded from the dazzle of the instant, the tranquil light of half a century is spread beneath his eye. Many a gaudy bubble he has seen rise, and glitter, and burst ; many a modest good take secret root and grow. Every game of hope and passion he has seen played out, and for every passage presented on the living stage, can find a parallel scene in the old drama whose curtain never drops. The heroes and the wise of the past age, ideal to others, were real to him ; his familiars are among the dead, dear yet to many hearts ; and as he explores again that silent past, and climbs once more its consecrated heights, and loses himself in its sweet valleys, and rebuilds its fallen fragments, he feels something of an historic dignity, which sustains the trembling steps, and gives courage to the sorrowful decline. And so is it too with *family recollections*. To have had forefathers renowned for honourable deeds, to belong by nature to those who have bravely borne their part in life and refreshed the world with mighty thoughts and healthy admiration, is a privilege which it were mean and self-willed to despise. It is as a security given for us of old, which it were false-hearted not to redeem : and in virtues bred of a noble stock, mellowed as they are by reverence, there is often a grace and ripeness, wanting to self-made and bran-new excellence. Of like value to a people are *heroic national traditions*, giving them a determinate character to sustain among the tribes of men, making them familiar with images of great and strenuous life, and kindling them with faith in glorious

possibilities. No material interests, no common welfare, can so bind a community together, and make it strong of heart, as a history of rights maintained, and virtues uncorrupted, and freedom won : and one legend of conscience is worth more to a country than hidden gold and fertile plains. It is but an extension of the same influence that we discern in the Christian theory of life : only that it opens out our time-view alike in the future and the past. It makes both our lineage and our destiny divine ; proclaims us *Sons* of God, and *heirs*. No tie can so fasten on us the feeling, that we belong not to the present, and degrade our nature whenever we live for the passing moment only : that we are not our own, but the great father, God's. Our lot is greater than ourselves, and gives to our souls a worth they would not else have dared to claim. Hence the humbleness there always is in Christian dignity. The immortal lot infinitely transcends our poor deserts : how we are to grow into the proportions of so high a life, it is wonderful to think. And yet, though it be above us always,—nay, even *because* it is above us,—there is something in it true and answering to our nature still : so that, having once lived with it, we are only half ourselves—and that the meaner half—without it. The infinite burthen of duty which good hearts are constrained to bear, is tolerable only to an immortal's strength. The unspeakable, imploring homage with which we look on truth and wisdom and greatness in other souls, is but sorrow and servitude, except to a spirit freed with an eternal love. The Christian hope gives peace and power by restoring the broken proportions of the mind ; and tranquillizes the restlessness of a spirit unconsciously "cabined,

cribbed, confined." It is this truthfulness to our best and deepest nature,—the power we receive from it, the quiet we find in it,—that gives to the Christian estimate of life its most irresistible persuasion upon the heart. For my own part, I confess it is the only evidence that seems to give me true, serene, absolute faith ; and when, in lower moods of thought, I am driven to east about for a limited, intellectual ground of trust, and become a disciple according to argument, I sometimes doubt whether I do more than fancy I believe.

With what temper then does this great faith send us forth to our immediate work ?—With the assurance that the true life is not yet ; that nobler forms of being and affection are in reserve for faithful minds ; that the present derives its chief interest and value, not from itself, but from its relations. To live, in short, consists not in enjoying the day and forgetting in the night ; but in a waking conscience, a self-forgetful heart, an ungrudging hand, a thought ever earnest for the truth ; in a perpetual outlook of hope from our lower point upon an upper and infinite glory. We need not let the present be so eclipsed by the future,—we need not look upon its scenes or upon ourselves as so mean beneath that ulterior resplendence,—that life now should be darkened by the contrast, instead of cheered by the connection. It is no sad lot of expiation that we suffer, no penance that our years on earth perform, purifying by tears and mortification, a natural disqualification for any higher state. On the contrary, the germs of the immortal growth are within us now, and will spring up, not *by the bruising and crushing of our nature*, but *by its glorious opening out*. We are here to try and train out

faculties for great achievements and harmonious residence within the will of God. Nor is the theatre unworthy of our best endeavours. Only let us not, in action or in suffering, sink down upon the present moment, as if that were all. Amid the strife and sorrow that await us, let us remember, that the ills of life are not here on their own account, but are as a divine challenge and godlike wrestling in the night with our too reluctant wills: and since, thus regarded, they are truly evil no more, let us embrace the conflict manfully, and fear no defeat to any faithful will. When all is well with us in this world, let us not forget that its enjoyments also are not here on their own account: the cup is not to be tossed off in careless draughts. They too stand in relation to the affections and character of soul, and thence derive their truest worth: it were sin to take them to our selfish sensibilities alone; and they must warm us with a grateful and a generous mind, more trustful in the love of God, more prompt with a true pity for man. And when we best and most strenuously follow the obligations of our career, we can permit no flutter of self-gratulation to disturb the quiet meekness of the heart. For only look up on that which we dare to hope, and how are our mightiest achievements dwarfed. All insufficient in themselves,—poor spellings-out of the mere alphabet of eternal wisdom,—they are but signs of willing pupilage,—the upturned look of a disciple sitting at the feet. As symbols of faith and service, God will be graciously pleased to accept them from us; and discern in them the early essays of a soul that shall assume at length dimensions more divine.

## XVII.

### THE FAMILY IN HEAVEN AND EARTH.

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EPHESIANS III. 14. 15.

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST,—OF WHOM THE WHOLE FAMILY IN HEAVEN  
AND EARTH IS NAMED.

JESUS was never so much one with his disciples, as when he was no longer with them: they were never so widely severed from him, as when, with unawakened and dim-discerning heart, they lingered around him, with eyes so holden that they did not know him. The nearest in person may clearly be the furthest in soul; they may eat at the same table, and morning and night exchange the greeting and the parting look, yet each remain outside the spirit of the other,—severed even by an impassable chasm, to which the earth's diameter would be less than an arm's length. But where the inner being, rather than the mere outer, has been passed together, and we have found in some fraternal heart the appointed confessional for the doubts, and strife, and sorrowful resolves of our existence, no amount of land or water can break the mutual affiliation: the reciprocation of pity and of trust, the placid memories, the joint courage to bear well the solemn weight of life, which enrich a present love, may consecrate the absent

too. Nay, distance may even set a human life in truer and more affectionate aspect before us, by stripping off its trivialities, and bringing out its essential features, and urging our thought to conceive it as a whole from its beginning to its close: and in the want of any lighter union, we fold ourselves in the embrace of the same divine laws, and compassion for the same mortal lot.

With the boldness of a true and inspired nature, the apostle Paul gives an immeasurable extension to this thought; and speaks with incidental ease, of *one* "*family*," distributed between heaven and earth. There is, it seems, a domesticity that cannot be absorbed by the interval between two spheres of being;—a love that cannot be lost amid the immensity, but finds the surest track across the void;—a home-affinity that penetrates the skies, and enters as the morning or the evening guest. And it is Jesus of Nazareth who has effected this;—has entered under the same household name, and formed into the same class, the dwellers above and those beneath. Spirits *there*, and spirits *here*, are gathered by him into one group; and where before was saddest exile, he has made a blest fraternity. Let us observe in what instances, and by what means, the spirit of Christ draws into one circle, the members of some human society, separated else by hopeless distance.

Members of the same home cannot dwell together, without either the memory or the expectation of some mutual and mortal farewell. Families are forever forming, forever breaking up; and every stroke of the pendulum carries the parting agony through fifty homes. There is no one of mature affections from whose arms



some blessing of the heart,—parent, sister, child,—has not died away, and slipped, not as once into extinction, but (chief thanks to Messiah's name) into eternity. All we who dwell in this visible scene can think of kindred souls that have vanished from us into the invisible. These, in the first place, does Jesus keep dwelling near our hearts ; making still one family of those in heaven and those on earth.

This he would do, if by no other means, by the prospect he has opened, of actual restoration. Hopeless grief for the dead, in being passionate, is tempted to be faithless too : for, it has no remedy but in suffering remembrance to fade away, and employing the gaudy colours of the present to paint over the sacred shadows of the past. On the other hand, the most distant promise of a renewed embrace is sufficient to keep alive an unforgetful love. Come where and when it may, after years or ages, in the nearest or furthest regions of God's universe, it passes across our minds the vision of reunion : it opens a niche in the crypt of the affections, where the images of household memory may stand, and gaze with placid look at the homage of our sorrow, till they light up again with life, and fall into our arms once more. It matters little at what point in the perspective of the future the separation enforced by death is thought to cease. Faith and Love are careless time-keepers : they have a wide and liberal eye for distance and duration : and while they can whisper to each other the words 'Meet again,' they can watch and toil with wondrous patience,—with spirit fresh and true, *and, amid its most grievous loneliness, unbereft of one*

good sympathy. And since the grave can bury no affections now, but only the mortal and familiar shape of their object ; death has changed its whole aspect and relation to us : and we may regard it, not with passionate hate, but with quiet reverence. It is a divine message from above, not an invasion from the abyss beneath ; not the fiendish hand of darkness thrust up to clutch our gladness enviously away, but a rainbow gleam that descends through tears, without which we should not know the various beauties that are woven into the pure light of life. Once let the Christian promise be taken to the heart ; and as we walk through the solemn forest of our existence, every leaf of love that falls, while it proclaims the winter near, lets in another patch of God's sunshine, to paint the glade beneath our feet, and give "a glory to the grass." Tell me that I shall stand face to face with the sainted dead ; and, whenever it may be, shall I not desire to be ready, and to meet them with clear eye and spirit unabashed ? Shall I not feel, that to forget them were the mark of a nature base and infidel ?—that under whatever pleasant shelter I may rest, and over whatever wastes I may wander as a wayfarer in life, I must bear their image next my heart ;—like the exile of old, flying with his household gods hidden in his mantle's secret folds ? That the Gospel leaves undetermined the period and place of restoration ;—that we call it ' hereafter ' and know not when it is : that we call it ' heaven ' and know not where it is ;—detracts nothing from its power to unite into one family the living and the departed. It is the office of pure religious meditation to thin away

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the partitions of time till they vanish, and cast a zone around space and enclose it all within the mind ; to feel that whatever is certain must be soon, and whatever is real must be near at hand. And hence, it is the characteristic of Christianity to be indifferent as to the time and locality of the events in which it excites our faith. Content with scattering great and transforming ideas, it allows every kind of misplacement in these accidental relations : for, if *true* portions of the invisible are given to our belief, what matters the disposition into which our thoughts may throw them ? Early or late, near or far, are alike in the eye of God, and may well be left open to mutable interpretation from the wants and affections of men. Jesus himself spake much, before his crucifixion, of his reunion with his disciples. It was his favourite topic throughout that parting night ;—the subject, now of promise, now of prayer ;—the vision from which, in that hour of anguish, he could never, for many moments, bear to part. He leaves the impression that it would be very speedy ; and so thought the apostles ever after. And as to place, his expressions fluctuate somewhat between *here* and *there* ; though his hearers thenceforth looked, and looked in vain, for him to come back to be with them. But of what concern was this ? For, were they not ready to meet him, be it where it might ? Did not that hope keep alive within their hearts the divine and gracious image of their Lord, and, at the end of forty years of various toil, still evoke it, beaming and breathing as though it were of yesterday ? Worlds above, and worlds below ;—mansions are they all of the great Fa-

ther's house : and the disciples' greeting would be equally blessed, whether the immortal Galilean descended to the embrace on this vestibule of finite things ; or summoned them rather across its threshold into the Presence-chamber of the Infinite. And no less indifferent to our affections are the localities beyond the grave. Having faith that the lost will assuredly be found, our souls detain them lovingly in the domestic circle still, and own one family in heaven and on earth. We may cease to ask, in *which* of the provinces of God may be the city of the dead : a guide will be sent, when we are called to go.

Such and so much encouragement would Christianity give to the faithful conservation of all true affections, if it only assured us of some distant and undefinable restoration. But it appears to me to assure us of much more than this ; to discountenance the idea of any, even the most temporary, extinction of life in the grave ; and to sanction our faith in the absolute immortality of the mind. Rightly understood, it teaches not only that the departed *will* live, but that they *do* live, and indeed have never died, but simply vanished and passed away. It opens to our view the diviner sphere of Christ's ascension, wherever it may be, not as a celestial solitude, where he spends the centuries alone ; but as the ever-peopling home of men and nations, where predecessors waited to give him welcome, and disciples go to call him blessed. It is a great thing, thus totally to abolish the idea of any annihilation, however momentary, in death, and to reduce it to simple separation. For, it is a perilous and even fatal concession to the power of

the grave, to admit that it holds anything in non-existence, and absolutely cancels souls ; swallowing up every trace of their identity, and necessitating the creation of another, though corresponding, series. Once let an object of deep love drop into that abyss and sink in its privative darkness, and how shall I recover it again ? Faith stands trembling on the awful brink, and with vain cries and broken supplications owns herself unequal to the task : for, between *being* and *no being*, who can fathom the infinite depth ? The very creature that has really fallen through it, scarcely can Omnipotence bring back ; though it produce another like in every feature, giving us the phantasm and not the essence. But neither to God's power, nor to our faith, does death present any serious perplexity, if it be only the migration of a spirit that does not cease to live. Thus regarded, it interposes nothing but physical distance between us and the objects of our affectionate remembrance. While we poor wayfarers still toil, with hot and bleeding feet, along the highway and the dust of life, our companions have but mounted the divergent path, to explore the more sacred streams, and visit the diviner vales, and wander amid the everlasting Alps, of God's upper province of creation. The memorial which our hand affectionately raised when they departed, is no monument to tell what once had been and is no more ; it is no symbol of hopeless loss ; but the landmark from which we measure off the miles of our solitary way, and reckon the definite, though unknown, remnant of our pilgrimage : and as the retrospect is lengthened out, the prospective loneliness is shortening

to its close. And so we keep up the courage of our hearts, and refresh ourselves with the memories of love, and travel forward in the ways of duty with less weary step, feeling ever for the hand of God, and listening for the domestic voices of the immortals whose happy welcome waits us. Death, in short, under the Christian aspect, is but God's method of colonization ; the transition from this mother-country of our race to the fairer and newer world of our emigration. What though no other passage thither is permitted to all the living, and by neither eye nor ear we can discover any trace of that unknown receptacle of vivid and more glorious life ? So might the dwellers in any other sphere make complaint respecting our poor world. Intensely as it burns with life, dizzy as our thought becomes with the din of its eager passions, and the cries of its many woes, yet from the nearest station that God's universe affords,—nay, at a few miles beyond its own confines,—all its stormy force, its crowded cities, the breathless hurry and ferment of its nations,—the whole apparition and chorus of humanity, is still and motionless as death ; gathered all and lost within the circumference of a dark or illumined disk. And silent as those midnight heavens appear, well may there be, among their points of light, some one that thrills with the glow of our lost and immortal generations ; busy with the fleet movements, and happy energies, of existence more vivid than our own ; where, as we approach, we might catch the awful voices of the mighty dead, and the sweeter tones, lately heard in the last pain and sorrow, of our own departed ones.

But it is not merely the members of the same literal home that Christ unites in one, whether in earth or heaven. He makes the good of every age into a glorious family of the children of God ; and inspires them with a fellow-feeling, whatever the department of service which they fill. Discipleship to Christ is not like the partizanship of the schools,—an exclusive devotion to partial truth, an exaggeration of some single phase of human life. Keeping us ever in the mental presence of the divinest wisdom and in veneration of a perfect goodness, it accustoms us to the aspect of every grace that can adorn and consecrate our nature ; trains our perceptions instantly to recognise its influence or to feel its want. It looks with an eye of full and clear affection over the wide circle of human excellence. Had we not been followers of One, whose thoughts were often deep and mystic, showing how simplicity touches upon wonder, and wonder elevates simplicity ; we might have overlooked the high problems of our life, and held in light esteem the souls agitated by their grandeur, perhaps lost in their profundity. Had we not sat at the feet of One, before whose gentle tones and patient looks the shrinking child and repentant woman might feel it a safe and healing thing to stand, we might have despised that faith of love which, in being feminine, does not cease to be manly, and have allowed no recess of honour in our hearts to the apostles of meekness and mercy. Had we not heard, from a Master's lips, the blighting severities before which Pharisees and hypocrites flinched and stood aghast, we might have softened unworthily the austere claims of truth and justice, have lost the healthy

horror at sin, and refused our thanksgiving to the patriots and prophets, whose flashing zeal has purified the atmosphere of this world. And were it not for the words so infinitely graceful, and prayers of deepest aspiration, that fell from Messiah's lips, the very soul of Christendom would have been steeped in colours far less fair : we might never have felt how soon the kindred fountains of sanctity and beauty blend together ; and have denied to the poet, as the priest of nature, his fit alliance with the priest of faith. But thrown as we are into reverence for no disproportioned and unfinished soul, we cannot but contract a catholic sympathy for every noble form assumed by our humanity. Philosophy and art, the statesman and the bard, the reformer and the saint, all take their place before us in the Providential sphere, and in proportion as they are faithful to their trust, draw from us an admiring recognition. We see in them selections from the exhaustless inspiration of the infinite wisdom ; streaks of divine illumination, rushing in through the cloud-openings of our world. No genuine disciple can be sceptical as to the existence, or fastidious as to the acknowledgment, of any true worthiness. We owe it largely to the author of our faith, that we cannot encounter the great and good in the generations of the past, without affectionate curiosity, and even strong friendship. Christ, himself the discernor of the Samaritan's goodness and the alien's faith, has called the noble dead of history to a better life than they had before, even in this world : their memory is dearer ; their example, more productive ; their spirit, more profoundly understood. Thus is there a fraternity



formed that disowns the restrictions of place and time ; a Church of Christ that passes the bounds of Christendom : and though in the general chorus of great souls, disciples only can well apprehend the theme and put in the words, yet the glorious voices of Socrates and Plato, of Alcæus and Pindar, of Aristides and Scipio, of Antoninus and Boethius, richly mingle as preluding or supporting instruments, filling the melody, though scarce interpreting the thought. Nor is this brotherhood confined even by historic bounds : it spreads beyond this sphere and makes one family in heaven and earth. The very faith that the honoured men of old still live, and carry on elsewhere the appointed work of faithful minds, unspeakably deepens our interest in them ; forbids us to sigh after them as irrecoverable images of the past ; enrolls them among our contemporaries ; and from the lights of memory transfers them to the glories of hope. If Pascal's ' thoughts ' are not half published yet, but are pondering for us the secrets of sublimer themes : if Shakspeare's genial eye is withdrawn from the stage of life only that it may read the drama of the universe ; if Paul, having testified for what a Christ he lived, shall yet tell us for what a gain he died : if Isaiah's harp is not really silent, but may fill us soon with the glow of a diviner fire ;—with what solemn heart, what reverential hand, shall we open the temporary page by which, meanwhile, they speak with us from the past ! Such hope tends to give us a prompt and large congeniality with them : to cherish the healthful affections which are domestic in every place and obsolete in no time ; to prepare us for entering any new scene, and join-

ing any new society where goodness, truth and beauty dwell.

Even this wide friendship need not entirely close the circle of our fraternity. Beyond the company of the great and good, a vast and various crowd is scattered round : no line must be drawn which they are forbid to pass : some span of sympathy must embrace them too. No proud mysteries, no secret initiation, guards the entrance to the Christian brotherhood ; even wandering guilt must be sought for and brought home ; and penitence that sits upon the steps must be asked to come within the door. Christ will not remain at the head of the " whole family," if its forlorn and outcast members are simply put away in selfish shame, and no gentle care is spent to smoothe the pathway of return. He gives to some a present joy in one another : he denies to none a hope for all. The alliance of our hearts is itself founded on the kindred in our being ; and is but the actual result of affections not impossible to any. The affinities of nature lie deeper than the sympathies of taste ; and should be accepted as guarantees for the equal tenderness of God, amid the alienations of our foolish passions. And whoever will take to heart, how the same human burthen is laid on all, and the divine relief so nobly used by some is for a while so sadly missed by more ; how much resemblance lurks under every difference between man and man ; how small a space may often separate the decline into grievous failure and the ascent into glorious success ; must surely feel the yearnings of a fraternal heart towards all who have borne the earthly mission ; must look on the apparition and disappearance

of generation after generation on this scene with an almost domestic regret and household pity for his kind: consoled and elevated by the trust, that men and nations who have performed the parts of shame and sorrow here are trained to nobler and more natural offices elsewhere.

## XVIII.

### THE SINGLE AND THE EVIL EYE.

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MATTHEW VI. 22. 23.

THE LIGHT OF THE BODY IS THE EYE: IF THEREFORE THINE EYE BE SINGLE, THY WHOLE BODY SHALL BE FULL OF LIGHT; BUT IF THINE EYE BE EVIL, THY WHOLE BODY SHALL BE FULL OF DARKNESS. IF THEREFORE THE LIGHT THAT IS IN THEE BE DARKNESS, HOW GREAT IS THAT DARKNESS!

GREAT indeed! because it not only hides realities, but produces all kinds of deceptive unrealities; to the blinding character of all darkness, adding the creative activity of light; suppressing the clear outline and benign face of things, and throwing up instead their twisted and malignant shadows. This is the difference, so awfully indicated by the greatest of Seers in the words just cited, between the *evil eye* and *no eye at all*. The latter only misses what there is: the former surrounds itself by what is not. The one is an innocent privation, that makes no pretence to knowledge of the light; the other is a guilty delusion, proud of its powers of vision, and applying its blind organ to every telescope with an air of superior illumination. The one is the eye simply closed in sleep: the other, staring with nightmare, and burning with dreams; whose strain the gloom of mid-

night does not relieve, and whose trooping images the dawning light does not disperse. He whose very light has become darkness, treats the privative as positive, and the positive as privative: he sees the single, double, and the double, single: with him nothing is infinite, and the infinite is nothing. The great prism of truth is painted backward, and the rainbow of promised good is upside down: and while he cannot espy the angel standing in the sun, he can read the smallest print by the pit-lights of Tophet, that threaten to blind the spirits, and smoke out the stars. To the evil eye, the universe is not simply hidden, but reversed.

This will not appear strange to any one who considers that two things are requisite for perception of any sort; viz., an *object*, and an *instrument*, of perception;—an outward thing, and an inward faculty. Sunshine is of no use in an eyeless world; and the most sensitive retina is wasted in the dark. The impressions we receive are the result of a *relation* between the scene by which we are environed, and the mind with which we survey it: take away either term of this relation, and the other disappears. In like manner, *alter* the character of either term, and the relation ceases to be the same. The sweet may become bitter, not only by chemical changes in the substance, but by the sick palate of the taster. And if it were the Creator's will to paint afresh the spectacle of his works visible from this earth, and make the heavens green and the grass like fire, he might work the miracle, either by revising the laws of light and colour, or by fitting up our visual power anew, and tinging its glass with different shades. Nor could we ever, in such case,

tell *which* it was ; our consciousness commencing with the effect and not reaching back to the cause. Just as it would be, if all our measures of time were to be simultaneously accelerated to a double speed. Under such conditions, an apparent revolution would take place in the duration of all phenomena. It would seem, that human life had resumed its patriarchal length, and all recent history would appear as through a diminishing medium. Nor indeed is it any idle fancy that such changes are possible. We even feel the warning touch of them day by day : and their faint breath, like a passing chill trespassing from the invisible, sweeps by and leaves an awe on thoughtful hearts. If self-forgetful activity, or the lively commerce of mind with mind, can dwindle hours into minutes, while a dull and heavy sorrow may protract a night into an age ; if the dream of a few instants can comprise the history of years ;—how evident is it that our apparent time, which is our real life, stretches or shrinks with the variable moods of the mind ; that not only does the way we go become as the moist meadow or the parched desert, according as we gaze through the cool lens of a pure health, or the throbbing eye of fever, but by the quicker or slower pace of thought, we may be made to fly across the soft grass of our refreshment, or crawl over the hot sands of our torture ; that, by only such shifting of our time-measures as occurs in each night's sleep, a thousand years might become to us also as one day, or one day as a thousand years ; that thus the smallest element of joy or woe might be multiplied into infinite value, and a heaven or hell be constructed from the feeling dropped by a mo-

ment's passing wing ! Here at least, the veil of tender mercy becomes transparent, which alone screens us from a lot more terrible than death.

So far however as our views of things are determined by the endowments conceded to our nature, we accept them with a calm content. We know indeed that God might have made us otherwise, and so have set quite a different universe before us : nor have we the smallest power of comparing that possible system of phenomena with this actual, so as to demonstrate which of them may best agree with the truth of things. This is a matter which, like all the foundations of our being, must rest on faith : it is one of our very roots, which we cannot manufacture for ourselves in the dry light ;—which we cannot even scrape up to look at how it lives ;—but which insists on growing down into the darkness, and spreading its fibres through the subsoil of nature. It is plain, that if our faculties were in themselves incapable and deceptive ; or if they were hopelessly vitiated by secret and resistless causes,—there would be no help for us. We could no more lift ourselves above our illusions and perversions, than the ape could raise himself into a man, or the man into an angel. We cannot issue from ourselves, and alight upon a station outside our own nature : that nature is with us when we judge it, and does but pass sentence on itself. We cannot think of the laws of thought, but by remaining within them ; or estimate what we know, except as an element of knowledge. However often the drop may turn itself inside out, and circulate its particles from centre to surface, and from pole to pole, it remains the same con-

stant sphere, reflecting the same vault that hangs over it, and yielding to the same attractions stirring within it. And while there would be no help for such human incapacity, there could be no consciousness of it. To be conscious of it, would be to escape it,—to have a rule of judgment exempted from its operation ; for, he who sees that he has missed the truth, misses it no more. Faith therefore in our own faculties, as God has given them, is at the very basis of all knowledge and belief, on things human or divine ;—an act of primitive religion, so inevitable that without it scepticism itself cannot even begin, but wanders about through the inane, in fruitless search for a point on which to hang its first sophistic thread. And each one of our natural powers is to be implicitly trusted within its own sphere, and not beyond it : the senses as reporters of the outward world ; the understanding, in the ascertainment of laws and the interpretation of nature ; the reason and conscience, in the ordering of life, the discernment of God, and the following of religion. Whoever tries to shake their authority, as the ultimate appeal in their several concerns, though he may think himself a saint, is in fact an infidel. Whoever pretends that anything can be above them,—be it a book or a church,—is secretly cutting up all belief by the roots. Whoever tells me that prophet or apostle set himself above them, and contradicted, instead of reverently interpreting and rendering audible, the whispers of the highest soul, is chargeable with fixing on the messengers of God the sure sign of imposture or of wildness. To tell me, with warnings against my erring faculties, that a thing is divine which



offends my devoutest perception of the true and holy ; —as well might you persuade me to admire the sweetness of a discord by abusing my sense of hearing, or to prefer a sign-board to a Raffaele by enumerating optical illusions and preaching on the imperfections of sight. Amid the clamour of dissonant theologies, let us sit then, with a composed love, at the feet of him who pointed to the way,—which no doubt can darken and no knowledge close,—*of seeing God through purity of heart*. That clear and single eye, filling the soul with light ; what is it but the open thought and Conscience by which the truth of heaven streams in ? And does not Jesus appeal to this as our only rescue from utter darkness and spiritual eclipse ? If so, then men can see for themselves in things divine. They are not required to take on trust a rule of life and faith, in which they would discern no authority and feel no confidence, were it not for the seal it professes to carry, and the affidavit with which it is superscribed. A system, indeed, befriended on the mere strength of its letters of recommendation misses everything divine. A rule which cannot authorise itself is no rule of duty, no source of obligation ; but, at best, only a maxim of policy and instruction to self-interest. Till it touches us with its internal sanctity and excellence, and we can no longer neglect it without shame and remorse as well as fear, our adoption of it is not moral, but mimetic : we imitate the things which may be duty to persons who have a conscience, but which are no duty to us. If Christ alone had personal and first-hand discernment of the truth *and authority* of Christianity, and all other men have to

take it solely on his word, then Christianity wholly ceases to be a Religion, and the compliance with it becomes a mere simial observance of the movements of a great posture-master of the soul. It is as if God had sent one solitary being gifted with eye-sight into a world of the blind, to teach them to act *as though they could see* ; groping about in dark places and shading their faces in a blaze : in which case, the actions, proceeding from no vision, would have no meaning, and, though displaying docility, would border on foolishness and hypocrisy. Turn the matter as we may, it will appear that the fullest, most unqualified admission of a moral and rational nature in man, whose decisions no external power can overrule, and which constitutes God's ever open court for trying the claims of scripture and prophecy, no less than of philosophy, is the prime requisite of all devout faith ; without which, duty loses its sacredness, revelation its significance, and God himself his authority.

Though, however, our first act of faith must be an implicit trust in the powers, through which alone divine things are apprehensible by us, it must be a trust in the intrinsic nature which God has given them, not in the actual state to which we may have reduced them. They are liable to the same law as the inferior endowments which connect us with material things : attaining clearness and precision with faithful use ; vitiated and discoloured by abuse ; benumbed and confused by disuse. The eye that had been long closed in privation opened at first with so little discernment as to see "men like trees, walking." And the soul shut up from earnest meditation, and drowsy amid the heavenly light to

which it should direct its patient gaze, is likely to see God, like Fate, sleeping ; or like a ghost, unreal ; or like the master-builder, retreating from the ship he has launched upon the waves ; or like the spectrum of the sun, a patch of darkness perforating the heavens, where once looked forth a glorious orb, "of this great world both eye and soul." Surely it is a truth of personal experience, that our views of God, of the life we live, of the world we occupy, materially change according to the caprices of our own mind. When the spirits are sinking, and the press of the world arises in its strength ; when the will trembles and faints beneath its load, and the hours seem to dash exulting by and leave us at a cruel distance ; when the presence of more energetic and devoted souls fills us with a sorrowing reverence, and humbles us to the dust with self-reproach ; when the silent shadow of lost opportunity sits cold upon us, and the memory of misspent moments drips upon the sad heart, like rain-drops from the wintry boughs ;—then, no peace of God, no tranquil order of life, no free and open affection, seems possible again : the bow of hope has fled from heaven, and the green sod of the earth is elastic to our feet no more : the very universe seems stricken with a rod of disappointment that has turned it into lead : and Providence either vanishes utterly from our view, or appears to us as a hard task-master, that lashes a jaded strength, and lays on us a burthen greater than we can bear. At other times, when perhaps some affliction casts us down, or some call of arduous duty startles us, we have clearness *enough* left to pray with a mighty and uplifted heart.

God seems to behold the silence of our surrender, and snatches us up into his infinite deliverance. The soul retreats within, and sees his light: it spreads without, and feels his power. We can put our heel on toil and fear, and move over them with the spring of resolution. A glory spreads over the clouds of sorrow, that makes them majestic as the serene and open sky: they hang over us as a canopy of heavenly fire, the hiding-place of a thunder that terrifies us not; or as the piled mountains of a sublimer world, in whose awful vallies we would abide, though threatened by the roar of the avalanche, and the advancing glacier of inevitable death. The things so huge to the microscopic eye of care retreat into infinite littleness before the sweep of a more comprehensive vision. Whole floods of trouble, peopled with terrors, become as dew-drops on the grass: and the very earth itself, with its crowd of struggling interests, appears as a calm orb floating in the deeps of heaven. Moments like these occur in the history of all tried and faithful minds; and comprise within them a larger portion of existence than years of the eating, drinking and sleeping, the bargaining and book-keeping, which men call life. They are the beacons and landmarks of our spiritual way, alone remaining visible over long reaches of our career. Nor do they stand alone, to show how our own mood affects, for better or worse, the views we take of things above us. Let a man go suddenly from the meal of luxury to the death-bed of selfishness, where no love lingers and tears only pretend to flow: let him pass from the sense of animal enjoyment to the spectacle of animal extinction;—and

he will inevitably believe in annihilation. The saintly words of everlasting hope will be as a strange jargon in his ears: the death-rattle on the bed will put out all the silent possibilities of eternity: he will shake off the remembrance of them as the remnants of a troubled dream; and return, with a shrug, to the table of his enjoyment, to "eat and drink, since to-morrow he dies." But only let the heart beat with love, and the eye look upon the scene through the perspective of an infinite sorrow: let it be the child catching the last accents of a parent venerated for richness of wisdom and greatness of life; or the parents, resigning the child whose infancy is the most graceful picture in their memory, to whose opening wonder they have held the guiding hand, whose expanding reason they have sought to fill with order and with light, whose deepening earnestness of duty and trust of pure affection has revived their fainting will, and refreshed them with a thankful mind: and do you think that any doubt will linger there? Do you suppose that that father or that child will be buried in the earth or sea?—can be hidden from the eyes by mountains of dust, or the waves of any unfathomable ocean? Ah no! All matter becomes transparent to inextinguishable light like this: and soil, and air, and water, and time, and the realm of death, must let this lamp of God shine through: and we follow it as it recedes in the holy darkness; till we too await the divine hand, and hope, with that help, to overtake it once again. Nay, can any one deny, that it is often possible to foreknow a man's moral and religious faith, *by mere acquaintance with the general temper of his*

mind?—that even his outward professions themselves go for little with us, if they are violently at variance with this natural expectation? It is useless to tell me, of a libertine and Epicurean, that he believes in the Divine Rule, and is a devout worshipper at church. I know him to be an atheist by a surer mark than words and postures,—by a necessity of corrupted nature, which can only be reversed by a renovated life. Nor need you try to persuade me that a soul pure, tender, merciful, has any real faith in a relentless Hell, where the cry of penitence can avail no more. Such things may stand written in creeds which those gentle lips may still repeat: but let the heretic friend or son die away from her arms, and she will find some divine excuse for keeping the torment far away. The eye of love is too clear and single, to allow of the light that is in it becoming so dread a darkness as that impossible faith.

Such then as the man is, such is his belief: and the faith to which he bears his testimony, testifies in return of him. He sees such things as his soul is qualified to show him; nor can he describe the prospect before him without betraying the direction to which his window turns. Let it not be supposed that truth and falsehood are thus rendered arbitrary and precariously distinguished; that, as there is a different interpretation of life and discernment of God for every temper of the mind, all are probable alike, and none deserving of our trust. It would be so, if we were always imprisoned in the same temper, and unable to compare it with another; or if, on the admission of such comparison, we could perceive no ground of difference, no reason of

preference. But we are ever passing from mood to mood of thought ; and it is not hidden from us which are sound and worthy, which are corrupt and mean. We know our shameful from our noble hours ; and we cannot honestly pretend to confide in the insinuations of the one, as we do in the inspirations of the other. Who can affect unconsciousness of the times, when the climate of his soul is dull and stagnant, and thick with fog ; and when it is clear and fresh, and eager to transmit the light ? Who can presume to compare the murky doubts and damp short-sightedness of the one, with the sunny outlook and far horizon of the other ; or ask, in good faith, ‘ how do I know which of these views is true ? ’ So long as the cloud does not fixedly close upon the heart, but light enough darts in to show us the intermediate darkness, excuse is shut out, and hope remains. The slightest opening left may be enlarged ; Heaven will look in, and may melt the margin as it passes through. Whoever will reverence the glimpses of his better mind shall find them multiplied ; and even whilst they pass, they may be rich in revelations. Faithfully used, the momentary transit may expound an everlasting truth ; and by predicting, may procure, the recurrence of like happy instants. Ashamed of no pure love, distrustful of no worthy aspiration, forgetful of no clear insight once granted to the soul, we shall find the weight of gloom and fear fast break away, and beneath the open hemisphere of faith bend in the worship of joy, and say, “ Thou art light, and in thee is no darkness at all.”

## XIX.

### THE SEVEN SLEEPERS.

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ISAIAH XLVI. 9. 10.

REMEMBER THE FORMER THINGS OF OLD. FOR I AM GOD, AND THERE IS NONE ELSE: I AM GOD, AND THERE IS NONE LIKE ME; DECLARING THE END FROM THE BEGINNING, AND FROM ANCIENT TIMES THE THINGS THAT ARE NOT YET DONE; SAYING; MY COUNSEL SHALL STAND.

THE fictions of popular piety are usually inconstant and local. But there is a legend of the early Christianity, whose ready acceptance within a few years of its origin is not less remarkable than its wide diffusion through every country from the Ganges to the Thames; —a legend which has spread over West and East from the centres of Rome and Byzantium: which you may hear in Russia or in Abyssinia; and which, having seized on the ardent fancy of Mohammed, is found in the Koran, and is as familiar to the Arab and the Moor, as to the Spaniard and the Greek.

In the middle of the fifth century, the resident proprietor of an estate near Ephesus was in want of building-stone to raise some cottages and granaries on his farm. His fields sloped up the side of a mountain, in which he directed his slaves to open a quarry. In obey-



ing his orders they found a spacious cavern, whose mouth was blocked up with masses of rock artificially piled. On removing these, they were startled by a dog, suddenly leaping up from the interior. Venturing further in, to a spot on which the sunshine, no longer excluded, directly fell, they discovered, just turning as from sleep, and dazzled with the light, seven young men of dress and aspect so strange, that the slaves were terrified, and fled. The slumberers, on rising, found themselves ready for a meal ; and, the cave being open, one of them set out for the city to buy food. On his way through the familiar country (for he was a native of Ephesus) a thousand surprises struck him. The road over which yesterday's persecution had driven him was turned ; the landmarks seemed shifted, and gave a twisted pattern to the fields : on the green meadow of the Cayster had sprung up a Circus and a mill. Two soldiers were seen approaching in the distance : hiding himself till they were past, lest they should be emissaries of imperial intolerance, he observed that the accoutrements were fantastic, the emblems of Decius were not there, the words that dropped from their talk were in a strange dialect, and in their friendly company was a Christian presbyter. From a rising ground, he looked down the river to the base of Diana's hill ; and lo ! the great temple,—the world-wide wonder,—was nowhere to be seen. Arrived at the city, he found its grand gate surmounted by a cross. In the streets, rolling with new-shaped vehicles filled with theatrical looking people, the very noises seemed to make a foreign hum. *He could suppose himself in a city of dreams ; only that*

here and there appeared a house, all whose rooms within he certainly knew ; with an aspect, however, among the rest, curiously dull and dwindled, as in a new window looks an old pane, preserved for some line scratched by poet or by sage. Before his errand is quite forgot, he enters a bread-shop to make his purchase ; offers the silver coin of Decius in payment ; when the baker, whose astonishment was already manifest enough, can restrain his suspicions no longer ; but arrests his customer as the owner of unlawful treasure, and hurries him before the city court. There he tells his tale : that with his Christian companions he had taken refuge in the cave from the horrors of the Decian persecution ; had been pursued thither, and built in for a cruel death ; had fallen asleep till wakened by the returning sun, let in again by some friendly and unhopèd-for hand ; and crept back into the town to procure support for life in their retreat. And there too, in reply, he hears a part of the history which he cannot tell : that Decius had been dethroned by Death nearly *two* centuries ago, and Paganism by the Truth full *one* : that, while heaven has wrapped him in mysterious sleep, the earth's face, in its features physical and moral, had been changed ; that empire had shifted its seat from the Tiber to the Bosphorus : that the Temple had yielded to the Church ; the demons of mythology to the saints and martyrs of Christendom ; and that he who had quitted the city in the *third* century, returned to it in the *fifth*, and stood under the Christian protection of the second Theodosius. It is added, that the Ephesian clergy and their people were conducted by the confessor to the cave,

exchanging wonders as they conversed by the way ; and that the seven sleepers, having attested in their persons the preserving hand of God, and re-told the story of their life, and heard snatches of the news of nearly two hundred years, gave their parting blessing to the multitude, and sank in the silence of natural death.

For the purpose of mental experiment, fable is as good as fact. To reveal our nature to itself, it is often more effectual for the imagination to go out upon a fiction, than for the memory to absorb a chronicle. When the citizens and the sleepers met, each was awe-struck at the other ; yet no one had been conscious of anything awful in himself. The youths, startled by the police of Paganism, had risen up from dinner, leaving their wine untasted ; and on arriving breathless at their retreat, laid themselves down, dusty, weary, ordinary creatures enough. They resume the thread of being where it hung suspended ; and are greeted everywhere with the uplifted hands, and shrinking touch of devout amazement. And the busy Ephesians had dressed themselves that morning, and swept their shops, and run down to the office and the dock, with no idea that they were not the most commonplace of mortals, pushing through a toilsome and sultry career. They are stopped mid-day to be assured, that their familiar life is an incredible romance, that their city is steeped in visionary tints, and they themselves are as moving apparitions. And they are told this, when they cannot laugh at it, or brush it, like Sunday memories, away. For who are they that *say such things*, gazing into them with full deep eyes ?

Counterparts in their looks of all the marvels they profess to see ;—proofs that the old, dead times were once alive, warm with young passions, noble with young faith ; astir with limbs that could be weary, and hiding sorrows whose sob and cry might be overheard. Would not the men, returning to their homes, be conscious of understanding life anew ? Would they not look down upon their children, and up at the portraits of their ancestors, with a perception from which a cloud had cleared away ? Would the fashion of the drawing-room, the convention of the club, the gossip of the exchange, retain all their absorbing interest ; and the wrestlings of doubt and duty, the sighs of reason, the conflicts of affection, the nearness of God, spoken of by prophets in the trance of inspiration, and the church in its prayer of faith, appear any more as idle words ? No ; the revelation of a reality in the Past, would produce the feeling of an unreality in the Present. Many invisible things would shape themselves forth, as with a solid surface, reflecting the heavenly light, and sleeping in the colours of pure truth : many visible things would melt in films away, and retreat like the escaping vista of a dream. When the people's anthem went up on the Sabbath morning, " Oh God of our fathers !" that grave, historic cry would not seem to set his spirit far, but to bring it overhanging through the very spaces of the dome above. When the holy martyrs were named with the glory of an affectionate praise, their silent forms would seem to group themselves meekly round. And when the upper life of saints and sages,—of suffering taken in its patience and goodness in its prime, of

the faithful parent and the Christ-like child, was mentioned with a modest hope, it would appear no fabled island, for which the eye might stretch across the sea in vain, but a visible range of everlasting hills, whose outline of awful beauty is already steadfast above the deep.

Now whence would spring an influence like this? what source must we assign to the power which such incident would have exerted over its witnesses? The essence of it is simply this: the Past stood up in the face of the Present, and spake with it: and they found each other out: and each learned, that he beheld the other with true eye, and himself with false. The lesson is not set beyond our reach. No miracle indeed is sent to teach it; no grotesque extracts from bygone centuries walk about among us. But our ties with other days are not broken; fragments of them stand around us; notices of them lie before us. The recesses of time are not hopelessly dark; opened by the hand of labour, and penetrated by the light of reason, their sleeping forms will rise and re-enter our living world, and in showing us what they have been, disclose to us what we are. The legendary youths are but the impersonations of history: and their visit to the Ephesians, but a parable of the relation between historical perception and religious faith.

The great end, yet the great difficulty, of religion is, so to analyze our existence for us, as to distinguish its essential spirit from its casual forms, the real from the apparent, the transient from the eternal. Experience mixes them all up together, and arranges nothing ac-

cording to its worth. The dress that clothes the body, and the body that clothes the soul, appear in such invariable conjunction, and become so much the signs of one another, that all run into one object, and tempt us to exaggerate the trivial and depreciate the great. That which a man *has*, and that which he *is*, move about together, and live in the same house ; till our fancy and our faith grow too indolent to separate them ; we fasten him to his possessions, and when they are dropped in death, think that he is gone to nought. It is the business of faith to see all things in their intrinsic value : it is the work of experience to thrust them on us in accidental combinations : and hence the flattening, sceptical, blinding influence of a passive and unresisted experience. Hence it is that time is apt to take away a truth for each one that he gives, and rather to change our wisdom than to increase it : and while foresight assuredly comes to the man, insight will often tarry with the child. When the eye first looks on life, it is not to study its successions, but to rest upon its picture : its loveliness is discerned before its order : its aspect is interpreted, while its policy is quite unknown. Our early years gaze on all things through the natural glass of beauty and affection, which in religion is the instrument of truth. But soon it gets dimmed by the breath of usage, which adheres to all except natures the most pure and fine : and a cold cloud darkens the whole universe before us. Day by day, the understanding sees more, the imagination less, in the scene around us ; till it seems all made up of soil to grow our bread, and clay to build our house : and we become impatient,

if any one pretends to find in it the depth which its atmosphere has lost to us, and the grandeur which has faded from our view. We dwell in this world, like dull serfs in an Alpine land ; who are attached indeed to their home with the strong instincts of men cut off from much intercourse with their kind, and whose passions, wanting diffusion, acquire a local intensity ; who therefore sigh in absence for their mountains, as the Arab for his desert ; but in whom there is no sense of the glories amid which they live ; who wonder what the traveller comes to see ; who in the valleys closed by the glacier, and echoing with the torrent, observe only the timber for their fuel, and the paddock for their kine. We are often the last to see how noble are our opportunities, to feel how inspiring the voices that call us to high duties and productive sacrifice : and while we loiter on in the track of drowsy habit esteeming our lot common and profane, better hearts are looking on, burning within them to stand on the spot where we stand, to seize its hopes, and be true to all its sacredness. It is an abuse of the blessings of experience, when it thus stupefies us with its benumbing touch, and in teaching us a human lesson, persuades us to unlearn a divine. The great use of custom is to teach us what to expect, to familiarize us with the order of events from day to day, that we may compute our way aright, and know how to rule whatever lies beneath our hand. This is the true school for the active, working will. But for the thoughtful, wondering affections, a higher discipline is needed ; an excursion beyond the limits where the senses stop, into regions where usage, breath-

less and exhausted, drops behind: where the beaten ways of expectation disappear, and we must find the sun-path of faith and reason, or else be lost. Only by baffled anticipation do we learn to revere what is above our hand: and custom must break in pieces before us, if we are to keep right the everlasting love within us, as well as the transient life without. Surrendering itself to habit alone, the mind takes step by step right on, intent on the narrow strip of its own time, and seeing nothing but its linear direction. But brought to the untrodden mountain-side, it is arrested by the open ground, and challenged by the very silence, and compelled to look abroad in space, and see the fresh, wide world of God; where all roads have vanished, except the elemental high-ways of nature,—the sweep of storm-felled pines, and the waving-line where melted waters flow. Now, in shaking off the heavy dreams of custom, and waking us up from the swoon so fatal to piety, religion receives the greatest aid from history: and though they seemed to be engaged in opposite offices, they only divide between them the very same. Religion strips the costume from the life that *is*: History restores the costume to the life that *was*: and by this double action we learn to feel sensibly, where the mere dress ends and the true life begins; how much, thievish time may steal, and corroding age reduce to dross; and what treasure there is, which no thief approacheth or moth corrupteth. Those who are shut up in the present, either by involuntary ignorance, or by voluntary devotion to its immediate interests, contract a certain slowness of imagination, most fatal both



to wisdom and to faith. Restrained in every direction by agglutination to the type of personal experience, their thought cannot pass beyond vulgar and material rules; cannot believe in any aspect of existence much different from things as they are; in any beings far removed from those that walk the streets to-day; in any events that would look absurd in the newspaper, or affect sagacious politicians with serious surprise. Their feeling can make nothing of the distinction between the mortal and the immortal, the spirit and the form of things. If they moralize on human affairs, it is only to say one of the two things which, since the days of Ecclesiastes, have always fallen from Epicurism in its sentimental mood: that all things continue as they were, and there can be nothing new under the sun; or that nothing can continue as it is, and all that is sublunary passes as the shadow; and as this dieth, so dieth that. A mind, rich in the past, is protected against these mean falsehoods; can discriminate the mutable social forms, from that permanent humanity, of whose affections, whose struggles, whose aspirations, whose Providential course, history is the impressive record; and thus trained, finds it easy to cast an eye of faith upon the living world, and discern the soul of individuals and of communities beneath the visible disguise, so deceitful to the shallow, so suggestive to the wise. The habit of realizing the past is essential to that of idealizing the present.

But, besides this general affinity between historical thought and the religious temper, a more direct influence of knowledge upon faith is not difficult to trace.

The great objects of our belief and trust cannot be conceived of, except in the poorest and faintest way, where all is blank beyond mere personal experience. A man to whom the present is the only illuminated spot, closely pressed in upon by outlying darkness all around, will vainly strive to meditate, for example, on the eternity of God. What sort of helpless attempt even can he make towards such a thing? He knows the measure of an hour, a day, a year: and these he may try to multiply without end, to stretch along the line of the infinite life. But this numerical operation carries no impression: it has no more religion in it, than any other long sum. The mere vacant arithmetic of duration travels ineffectually on; glides through without contact with the Living God; and gives only the chill of a void loneliness. Time, like Space, cannot be appreciated by merely looking into it. As in the desert, stretching its dreary dust to the horizon, all dimensions are lost in the shadowless sunshine; so, over a mere waste of years, the fancy strains itself only to turn dizzy. As, in the one, we want objects to mark the retreating distance, the rising spire, the sheltered green, the swelling light on headland slope; so, in the other, we need visible events standing off from view to make us aware of the great perspective. And for the ends of faith, they must be *moral* vicissitudes, the deeply-coloured incidents of *human* life: or, the vastness which we see we shall not love: we shall traverse the infinite, and never worship. Science, as well as history, has its Past to show:—a Past, indeed, much larger; running, with huge strides, deep into the old Eternity. But its immensity is dynam-

ical, not divine : gigantesque, not holy : opening to us the monotonous perseverance of physical forces, not the various struggles and sorrows of free will. And though sometimes, on passing from the turmoil of the city, and the heats of restless life, into the open temple of the silent universe, we are tempted to think, that there is the taint of earth, and here the purity of heaven ; yet sure it is, that God is seen by us through man, rather than through nature : and that without the eye of our brother, and the voices of our kind, the winds might sigh, and the stars look down on us in vain. Nor is the Christian conception of the second and higher existence of man heartily possible to those who are shut out from all historic retrospect. At least, the idea of other nations and other times, the mental picture of memorable groups that have passed away ; the lingering voices of poets, heroes, saints, floating on the ear of thought ; are a great, if not an indispensable aid to that hope of the future, which can scarcely maintain itself without attendant images. That old, distant, venerable earth of ours, with its quaint people, lies silent in the remote places of our thought ; and is not so far from the scene of scarcely more mysterious life, where all now abide with God : the same perspective embraces them both ; it is but the glance of an eye from below to above : and as the past reality of the one does not prevent its being now ideal, so the present ideality of the other is no hindrance to its reality. The two states,—that in the picture of history, and that on the map of faith,—recede almost equally from our immediate experience : and the conception of the one is a sensible help to the realiza-

tion of the other. Indeed there is not a truth of religion in reference to the future and the unseen which the knowledge of the past does not bring nearer to our minds. And when we invoke this aid to faith, we give it an ally, not, as might seem, accessible to learning only, but singularly open to the resources of ordinary men. Happily, the very fountains and depositaries of our religion are historical: and records of human affairs, not theories of physical nature, are supplied in the sacred writings, from which we learn the lessons of Providence. Apart from all questions of inspiration, there is no grander agent than the Bible in this world. It has opened the devout and fervid East to the wonder and affection of the severer West. It has made old Egypt and Assyria more familiar to Christendom than its own lands: and to our people at large the Pharaohs are less strange than the Plantagenets, and Abraham is more distinct than Alfred. The Hebrew prophet finds himself in the presence of the English tradesman, or domesticated in the Scotch village; and is better understood when he speaks of Jordan, than the poet at home who celebrates the Greta or the Yarrow. Scenes of beauty, pictures of life, rise on the people's thought across the interval of centuries and continents. Pity and terror, sympathy and indignation, fly over vast reaches of time, and alight on many a spot else unclaimed by our humanity, and unconsecrated by the presence of our God. It is a discipline of priceless value; securing for the general mind materials of thought and faith most rich and varied; and breaking that servile sleep of custom, which is the worst foe of true belief and noble hope. From the ex-

tension of such discipline, according to opportunity, whosoever is vigilant to keep a living faith, will draw ever fresh stores ; and, that he may better dwell in heart with Him “ who declareth the end from the beginning,” will “ remember the former things of old.”

## XX.

### THE SPHERE OF SILENCE.

#### I. MAN'S.

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LUKE VI. 45.

OF THE ABUNDANCE OF THE HEART, THE MOUTH SPEAKETH.

It is often assumed, as if implied in these words, that whatever is a fit subject for thought is necessarily the fit subject of conversation. As language is but the expression of the mind, it seems natural to suppose that the mind must appear through its medium; that the matters which occupy the lips must be those which engage the heart; and that no deep and powerful interest can fail to overflow, in its full proportion, on our communications with each other. *That* about *which* silence is the habit, and speech the exception,—which, even in the sweet counsel of friends, glides in but for the moment and flits away,—cannot, it is affirmed, have any strong and constant hold upon men; and by its transiency, confesses itself to be an evanescent interest. Many there are who apply this rule to Religion; and who would measure the reality and force of its influence on the character by the frequency and explicitness of its

appearance in our discourse. If we are truly penetrated with the same highest concerns ; if we are standing in the same attitude before God ; if the same solemnity of life covers us with its cloud, and the same glory of hope guides us by its fire ;—how can we do otherwise than always speak together of a lot so awful and a faith so high ? May it not be fairly doubted, whether those who are drawn by no experience, inspired by no joy, melted by no sorrow, to break their reserve on these things, have any devout belief of them at all ?

There seems to be a show of reason in this : and when it is urged on the modest and self-distrustful, they often gather from it a lesson of inward reproach, and know not how to answer. Yet the appeal has always failed to gain its end. It has not unsealed the lips of men to converse of divine, as they would of human, things : a certain loneliness, which cannot be removed, still hangs over their loftiest relations ; and they are stricken, as with dumbness, to one another, before God. There is, indeed, a foundation in our unperverted nature for this repugnance to mingle talk and worship, to look into another's eye and say the thought of inward prayer ; and it is a harsh and false interpretation to take such repugnance as the sign of irreligion. Many an earnest and devout heart, too lowly to teach others, too quiet to proclaim itself, you may find watching the scene of human things through a constant atmosphere of piety ; recognising a holy light on all ; touching each duty with a gentle and willing love ; yet saying not a word, because unable to make a special tale of that which is but *the truth* of nature. And many a family group may be

observed, gathering round the decline of some venerated life, well knowing whither it fast tends: and he who discerns nothing beneath the surface, may think it but a worldly thing, that all the care seems spent in providing outward alleviation, and sheltering from inward shock, and keeping some glow of tempered cheerfulness about the slackening pulse and deepening chill of life. But an eye less obtuse may often read a secret meaning in all this, and recognise in it the symbol of an unspoken mystery: the sacred hope, the perfect trust, the will laid low, the love raised high, make their confession by faithful act, and learn the right of a holy silence. And, assuredly, he to whose ready speech the sanctities most quickly come, who has no difficulty in running over everlasting things, and never pauses at the awful name, and can coin the words for what is most dear and deep, is not often the most truly devout. The sects and classes, moreover, who make the greatest point of bringing their Christianity into the drawing-room, the street, or the senate, after beguiling you into respect and perhaps admiration, continually let out the other half of the truth by some surprising coarseness, or some selfish intolerance. Yet, in spite of these appearances, it is altogether true that "of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh."

Language has two functions, easily distinguished, yet easily forgotten. It is an instrument of communication with one another; and an instrument of thought within ourselves. Plato used to say that Thought and Speech are the same: only that thought is the mind's silent dia-



logue with itself.\* It need not, however, be always silent: in its higher moods it presses for utterance: it cannot go on to rise without casting away the burthen of its words; and outbursts of song and pulses of prayer are as successive strokes of the ever-beating wing of aspiration. But in this we want no one to hear us: we could bear no watchful human presence: the voice is but the relief to the spirit overcharged; and our nature could not thus revolve in its own circuit, except in the loneliness which shelters it from foreign attractions. Speech therefore assumes two forms; Converse, and Soliloquy: the one intended to convey our thought abroad; the other to detain it at home: the one, opening what we wish; the other, what we hide: the one, the common talk of life; the other, equivalent to silence, except to those who may overhear. Of the latter only did Jesus say, that "out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh." He knew that what men utter face to face is often far different from the real thought of their minds; that they are no less ashamed of their best feelings than of their worst; and that, by watching the coin of words that passes between them in the open commerce of life, you can ill judge of the secret wealth

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\* The definition is so apposite that I am tempted to subjoin it:—

ΞΕ. Οὐκοῦν διάνοια μὲν καὶ λόγος ταύτων· πλὴν ὁ μὲν ἐντὸς τῆς ψυχῆς πρὸς αὐτὴν διάλογος ἄνευ φωνῆς γινόμενος τοῦτ' αὐτὸ ἡμῖν ἐπωνομάσθη, διάνοια;

ΘΕΑΙ. Πάνν μὲν οὖν.

Sophista 263. E. The same thought is more fully presented in the *Theætetus*, 189. E. 190. A.

or insolvency of their souls. To estimate them aright, you must wait till the company disperse ; and linger near them when they speak, amid the silence of God, not to others, but from themselves. Nor does this divergence of their private thought from their public conversation imply the slightest approach to artfulness and duplicity : on the contrary, it is possibly the most artless of whom it is most true. The false man has lost the half of himself which makes this variance. The double-dealer has but a single nature : but in the pure and guileless, there are two souls ; of which the one comes forward amid human things with quick and genial speech, while the other ever sits with finger on the lips. The one achieves its end, with energy and stir like that of the city's industry : the other noiselessly, like the spring growth of forest and of field : the one opens gladly out, the other shrinks, as if scorched, within, at the light of the human eye. Our nature is as a flower that shines of itself with one colour by night, and reflects from the sun another by day ; and those who see only its borrowed gaiety at noon know nothing of its own fainter beauty beneath the stars. The truth is, the presence of our fellows, and the exchange of looks and words with them, are the great instruments of self-consciousness, and are suitable for all those parts and faculties of a man which are improved by study and attention. But there are elements of our being that were never meant for this ; which change their character by being breathed upon ; or which vanish in the sound that utters them. They will insist on flowing unobstructed in their natural bed : and if gossip will arrest and dam

them up, they are turned from the torrent of health into the marsh of pestilence.

These are things too low to be spoken of: which indeed become low by being spoken of. The appetites are of this kind. They were meant to be the beginnings of action, not the end of speech: and under the dropping of words, they are as wholesome food analysed into constituent poisons. God lights that fire, and does not want our breath to blow it, or the fuel of our thought to feed it. The inferior impulses in man are glorified by being placed at the natural disposal of higher sentiments: they are submitted to the transforming power of generous aspiration and great ideas. Wielded by these, they are far above the level of Sense; and are not only controlled by conscience, but dignified by the light of beauty, and ennobled by the alliance of affection. Their just action is secured far less by repressive discipline against them, than by nourishing the strength of the humanities that use them; by keeping them wholly inattentive to themselves; by breaking every mirror in which their own face may be beheld. Purity consists, not in the ascetic abnegation of the lower; but in a Christian merging of the lower in the higher; in the presence of a divine perception so quick to recoil from degradation, that avoidance aforethought need not be studiously provided. And purity of mind is forfeited, less by exceeding rules of moderation, than by needing them;—by attention to the inferior pleasures, as such. There might be less of moral evil in the rude banquet of heroic times, marked perhaps by excess, but warmed by social enthusiasm, and idealized by lofty

minstrelsy, than in many a meal of the prudent dietician, setting a police over his sensations, and weighing out the scruples of enjoyment for his palate. Not rules of quantity, but habits of forgetfulness, constitute our emancipation from the animal nature. You cannot make any good thing of the voluptuary's mind, regulate it as you may. It may be covered over with an external disguise : it may be strengthened by self-restraint for social use : but, with all its wise ways, what trace can God behold there of his own image ? He sees at best Aristotle's " rational animal," not one of Christ's " children of the Highest." Most futile is the attempt so prevalent in our days, to base the morality of the appetites on physiology ; to open the way to heaven with the dissecting knife ; to give up the Prophets for the " Constitution of Man ;" and with a gospel of digestion to replace the Sermon on the Mount. Let us indeed accept such help as may come from this source also : but let us rate it at its worth and assign it to its place. Good for the remedy of bodily disease, it is not good for the formation of character : and it is odious as the substitute for religion. Whoever found himself nearer God by inspecting drawings of internal inflammation ? There may be those, to whom the check of abjectness and fear may be of service, and who must walk an hospital before they can respect a law. But as an element of education this kind of teaching is fatally misplaced. The ideas it communicates cannot co-exist with the high, devout affections, which are the natural guides and safe-guards of a pure heart : they can occur only in uneasy succession with them, and are repelled by

them with unconquerable antipathy. Indeed, in good minds, not needing recovery from fall, all mere physical and prohibitive morality is liable to be a source of direct contamination. By simply talking about your rules, you may turn innocence into guilt. The mere discussion of a habit necessarily converts it into a self-conscious indulgence or privation; and thereby totally alters its real character and its moral relations; and may make that evil which was not evil before. And thus, the very cure of outward excess may sometimes be attended with the creation of inward corruption; and what was harmless till you mentioned it, becomes sinful by being named. So are words great powers in this world; not only telling what things are, but making them what else they would not be: and they cannot encroach upon the sphere of silence, without desecrating the sanctuary of nature, and banishing the presence of God.

There are also things too high to be spoken of: and which cease to be high, by being made objects of ordinary speech. Language occupies the mid-region of our life, between the wants that ground us on the earth, and the affections that lift us to the skies.) If we were all animal, we could not use it: if we were as God, we should give it up, and lapse, like him, into eternal silence. It is the instrument of business, of learning, of mutual understanding, of common action; the tool of the Intellect and the Will; the glory of a nature more than brutal, the mark of one less than the divine; as truly the characteristic of labour in the mind, as the sweat of the brow of the body's toil; emblem at once of blessing and of curse; recalling an Eden half re-

membered, while we work in the desert that can never be forgot. When we try to raise it to higher functions, it only spoils the thing it cannot speak ; which becomes, like an uttered secret, a treasure killed and gone. Religion in the soul is like a spirit hiding in enshadowed forests : call it into the staring light, it is exhaled and seen no more ; or as the whispering of God among the trees ; peer about behind the leaves, and it is not there. Men in deep reverence do not talk to one another, but remain with hushed mind side by side. Each one feels, though he cannot tell how it is, that words limit what faith declares unlimited ; that they divide and break to pieces, what it comprehends and embraces as a whole ; that they distribute into dead members what it discerns as a life of beauty indivisible ; that they reduce to successive propositions what it adores as a simultaneous and everlasting reality. The whole operation of the mind in communicating by speech is the direct opposite of that which bends in worship ; the one labouring after definite conceptions and scientific reasoning ; the other intuitively evading both, and bursting the fetters which the provinces of nature own, but the infinity of God rejects. Hence it is that men lower the voice as they distantly approach these things, and deem it fit to let their words be few. Spoken reverence passes into cant : or, in more elaborated forms, into philosophy. I do not say that there may not be an intermediate period, when earnest men are able to establish a mutual language of religion which, in their day, is true to them ; but from the moment of its first freshness it begins to fade ; and the hour of its birth is the beginning of its

death. And soon the devoutest spirits will be those that say the least ; and the currency, once priceless, now debased, will remain chiefly with Pharisees and professional divines. True, there is a sceptic, as well as a devout silence on the highest things. But who is there that cannot tell at a glance the difference between the shrinking of unbelief, and the shrinking of reverence ? Look only at their eye ; and the shallow gloss of the one is not like the deep light of the other. The one pushes the matter externally away ; the other hides it internally from view. The one is averse to take the divine ideas into the mind ; the other recoils from putting them out. The one yields to the repulsion of dislike ; the other exercises the shelter of an ineffable love. There was truth, and not absurdity, in the Friends' silent meeting before God ;—a truth indeed too great and high for a permanent institution addressed to our poor nature, but affording an infallible memorial of the genuine inspiration that once breathed through that noble people. And what even were the whining voice and tremulous speech, but the instinctive attempt to escape from the vulgarities of life, and reach the strange music, broken, dissonant, and sweet, in which divine and human things conflict and reconcile themselves ? Nor is it essentially different in any worship : for, though we meet together, it is not to speak with one another : it is not even to be spoken to and taught : for that could produce nothing but theology : if it is not for absolute silence of devotion (which were best, if it were possible), it is only for soliloquy ; which is but the thought *before* God, of one, for the guidance of a silence before

God, of all. It is to Him we lay ourselves open, and not to our neighbor: only, the sense of brethren near who have concerns like our own that bring them hither, who feel with us his mystic touch, and look up to his heavenly hope, and remember the healing sorrows of his mercy, and expect his early call, and trust his everlasting shelter,—is a mighty help to those deep realities which are too great except for the consentaneous grasp of our collective soul. Prayer, like poetry, can never be anything but thought aloud: if ever it is “said for the sake of them that stand by,” it is a mockery and a pretence, from which every soul that is akin to Christ will shrink with abhorrence and with awe; and which none who had been altogether steeped in his spirit could ever ascribe to him. Nor let any one say that this makes the office of religion one of uncertain imagination, transient as the colours of beauty, and vague as the impressions of a dream. Never do we more completely deceive ourselves, than when we fancy that the work of the understanding is durable, while that of our richer genius is evanescent; that what we know is solid, what we aspire after and adore in thought is unsubstantial: that the achievements of physical discovery are the fixed products of time, while the visions of poetry are but the adornments of a passing age. How plainly does historical experience contradict this estimate! Of no nation, of no period, within the limits of known and transmitted civilization, does the most advanced science remain true for us: while of none has the genuine poetry perished. Thales and Archimedes have been obsolete for centuries:



while old Homer is fresh as ever, and delights the modern school-boy only less than he did the Greek hero. The acuteness of the Athenian intellect has left us no account of any law of nature, which the greatest masters of ancient knowledge deciphered as we do now : but the strains of Job and the rapt song of Isaiah will never be worn out, while a human soul is on the earth, and a divine heaven above it. The readings of philosophy, the creeds of theology, are alike transitory : but the discernment of sacred truth and beauty is perpetual and without essential change. Never knowing but *in part*, we find all our knowledge successively vanishing away : but in adoring the grandeur, feeling the solemnity, and aspiring to the perfection of the whole, the inspirations of genius and yearnings of faith are contemporaneous and eternal.

## XXI.

### THE SPHERE OF SILENCE.

#### II. GOD'S.

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JOHN I. 1 & 14.

IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD : AND THE WORD WAS WITH GOD ;  
AND THE WORD WAS GOD. AND THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH, AND  
DWELT AMONG US (AND WE BEHELD HIS GLORY,—THE GLORY AS  
OF THE FATHER'S ONLY-BORN) FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH.

HUMAN speech, it has already been observed, is employed in two different ways, issuing from states of mind distinct and almost opposite. We speak to impart information ; and we speak in confession of ourselves : in intentional address to the minds of others, or in unconscious revelation of our own : drawn by an external end which we wish to compass, or propelled by internal feeling which we cannot but express. In the one case, we begin with our purpose, and then lay, with such skill as we can command, our train of approach towards its realization : in the other, we start from the emotion that occupies us, and advance a long line of tendency, never lawless, yet ever unforeseen. The one discloses the policy at which our action aims : the other, the affection whence it issues. In the one, we teach,

we expound, we report the past, we predict the future ; in the other, we remember, we hope, we paint the soul's immediate vision, and own its everlasting faith. In the one, we talk and reason ; in the other, we meditate and sing. History and science are the birth of the one ; art and religion, of the other : morals and philosophy, of both.

But man is not the only being that has this two-fold voice. God also puts to a double engagement his silent instruments of expression. He too lives amid a company of minds ; and to them he has to say something of what already he has done, and of what he yet designs to do,—to communicate the order of the scene on which they stand, and put into the hand of expectation a clue of faithful guidance. But he also is a Mind, reserving within himself infinite powers, ever awake and moving ; thought, large as Space, and deep and solemn as the sea ; holiness, stern as the mountains, and pure as the breath that sighs around them ; a mercy, quick as the light, and gentle as the tints that make it. It is not for these to remain inert and repressed, as though they were not. They must have way, and have their overflow : and if only we place our spirits right, we may catch the blessed flood, and find it as the waters of regeneration. Beyond and behind every definite end of which it is needful to apprise us, there actually exists in the divine nature an indefinite affluence of living perfection, which cannot go for nothing in the universe. It may have not a word to say to others ; but whispers will escape it on its own account : it may not be heard ; and yet articulately

overheard : and, could we only find the focus of those stray tones, we should understand more than any knowledge can tell : we should learn the very prayers that Heaven makes for only Heaven to hear ; and should catch the soliloquy of God. And not only can we find it, but we are ever in it : and beneath the dome of this universe, which is all centre and no circumference, we cannot stand, where the musings of the eternal mind do not murmur round us, and the visions of his lonely, loving thought, appear.

Works of science and history are the medium in which men speak to us ; works of poetry and art, that in which they speak from themselves. With these the heavenly dialects precisely correspond ; being in fact the great originals, whereof these are but faint echoes. The *outward objects* of science and history,—the phenomena recorded by the one, and the events narrated by the other,—all the calculable *happenings* of the frame and order of things, are God's *didactic* address, in which he gives us the information we most need about his ways. And that which awakens poetry and art, the invisible light that bathes the world—the nameless essence that fills it,—the devout, uplifted look of all things,—is the personal effusion of God's spirit, by which the secret spreads of what he is. In the *System* of nature and life he teaches us his *will* : in the *Beauty* of nature and life, he meditates from *himself*. If we and all similar beings were away, the former would become unmeaning : and the busy movements, the mighty forces, the mechanical successions, the breathless haste of moments, the patient roll of ages, would seem to

be superseded, and to be a mere senseless stir, were they not in sympathy with teeming life, and a discipline of countless minds. But, in our presence or our absence, the everlasting beauty would still remain: all that lay beneath the eternal eye would sleep in the serene light, and wait no leave from us. *That* is a thought which God has writ only for himself: a *Word* of his that asks no audience. Yet he cares not to hide it from us: and he has made us so like himself, that a glance suffices to interpret, and to fill us with his blessed inspiration.

God is related to his works and ways, just as genius to the creations of poetry or art that issue from it: and both must be apprehended in the same manner,—by the softened gaze of reverence, not by the dry sharp-sightedness of knowledge. All our acute study of such things is but a delusion and a flattery, if we suppose it really to open to us the sources from which they come. You may analyze, if you will, the dramas of Shakspeare, the paintings of Raffaelle, the music of Beethoven; you may disengage for separate inspection, action, character, sentiment and costume; grouping and colours; theme and treatment; and you may thus know each composition at every turn; discern its structure; recognize its proportions; lay your finger on its happiest lights. But do you reproduce the state of mind that first created it? Do you get upon the traces of the author's way of work? Are your rules and laws, when you have drawn them out, a faithful representation of the soul from whose expression you have deduced them? Can they spread, beneath any other view, the many-

clustered plan of life, as it lay beneath the player's large and genial eye : or fill the world again with the rich tints and noble forms that reflected their repose upon the painter's face : or send through any second heart the wild night-winds that sighed and sung through the deaf musician's soul ? This, you will own, your criticism cannot do. At best, it does but sketch an artificial method, which if it could be perfectly obeyed, might be a substitute for the natural one. Only, it cannot be obeyed ; and when the attempt is made it produces not a living likeness but a dead imitation ; human nature turned into wax, and the heavens flattened to the canvass, and the passion of melody reduced to an uneasiness among the strings. The canons of taste, so far from being an approach to the mind of the artist, are the extreme point of departure from it ; being the expression of a dissecting self-consciousness, the intrusion of which would have been fatal to his work.

Now this principle appears to me to be rigorously applicable to our contemplation of the works and ways of God. What we call *Science* is nothing but our critical interpretation of nature ; our reduction of it into intelligible pieces or constituents, that we may view successively what we cannot grasp at once. And it no more exhibits to us the real sources from which creation sprang, or the modes of its appearing, than the critic's system shows us the poet's soul. The supposition is as derogatory to God in the one case, as it is insulting to genius in the other. The books which repeat to us the laws of the physical world usually mislead us on this matter. They enumerate certain forces,

with which they pretend to be on the most intimate footing, and which are able to do great things in the universe ; and by putting them together in this way and that, they show what events would come about : they then point out, that such events do actually occur ; and think it proved that the real phenomena are manufactured after their pattern, and truly spring from the causes in their list. Thus Newton is said to have detected the powers that determine the planetary orbits. He found them, we are assured, to be but *two* ; *one*, the primary impulse that commenced the motion of each globe, and sent it careering on its way ; the *other*, the constant attraction that curves it ever to the Sun. So fixed is this representation in our thoughts by the exposition of Astronomers, that it is generally accepted as a true picture of the *fact* : and, in order to trace the ellipse of our Earth or Mars, the two forces are supposed to have been, once upon a time, actually put together, and, like the separate parts of a machine, brought to co-operate. Yet, fondly as this image clings to our fancy, no thoughtful man can seriously hold to so gross an error. Was there then really a certain moment in the past, when the Divine hand shot forth the globes, and then condensed into the Sun the power to bend them into their ever-circling course ? Is it an historic fact in the universe, that this artillery of the skies was once played off, and might be seen by any spirit-witness passing by ? No : the planets are not a mere set of bowls : nor was the great court of the Zodiac bounded and made plane for such a game as that ! No one can well believe that this is an account of what

actually occurred : travel through the Past with the most vigilant eye, you nowhere arrive at such event. The imagination of it is a pure fiction which begins and ends with the mind that thinks it. What then, you will say, has Newton done? He has done this: he has found or defined two forces which, *if they were to operate under the conditions prescribed, would produce just such phenomena as we observe*. He has discovered a way in which the same thing *might be done*; has detected, not the actual causes, but a system of equivalents that will serve the end as well. By laying these before us, he fulfils the aim of knowledge: he gives us a rule by which to compute the course of nature, and from the present to foretell the approaching attitudes of things. He draws a true picture for us of all the future, and of all the past, that lies within the existing order: but of the source of that order, or the posture of affairs before it rose, he cannot afford the faintest glimpse. And so is it throughout the Sciences. Whenever they give you a report of *Causes*, they tell you, not the real process, but its equivalent: that by which *we should work*, not that by which *God does work*. The optician enumerates the several colours of which light is made: but who can think that thus we learn the order of God's creation,—and that first he provided the yellow, red, and blue, and then put them together to form the one white ray? The chemist will give you a list of what he finds in the bursting seed, the shooting plant, the growing animal; but do you suppose that the Divine hand really measures these doses of hydrogen and carbon; that in bringing out the gentle grass,



and shedding its glory on the forest tree, and tracing the dear human face, and putting a strange depth into the eye, God works by the pharmacopœia or the scale of chemical equivalents? Ah no! else were he not the Creator, but the manufacturer, of this universe; a mixer of ingredients; a worker in wood and iron: little more than a Vulcan, Neptune, or Æsculapius, with another name. To be chief artificer, chief dyer, chief engineer; to be able to construct a world, to tincture the drapery of clouds, and poise the clustered stars;—this is not to be the everlasting God. The steps by which we slowly understand are not the order in which he instantly discerns and eternally executes. The laws which we extract are but the patient alphabet in which he spells out successively to us the tendencies of his spontaneous thought. They are the rules which our criticism draws from the analysis of his productions: but, like the precepts taken from the study of ancient art, they express our afterthought, not his forethought; and though they are a true light to our knowledge, they are a false shadow on our Religion. In one sense, no doubt, they are the voice of God. As men talk to us and tell us what they have been doing and what they still intend to do; yet shelter from us, perhaps almost from themselves, their inmost love and worship; so here does God adopt our speech, address himself to our instruction, and teach us the outward purpose of his Will; but opens not the infinite Well-spring whence all the power and the order flow.

Is this then the only voice of his that comes to us from the physical world? It is the only voice in which

he directly accosts us, and commands our obedience. But we are always in his presence; and there would seem to be when he forgets that we are by; and his own nature confesses itself through all the loneliness of Space; and we may apprehend its essence rather than its act. To do this, we have but to look on creation as a picture, instead of examining it as a machine. It must fix our eye as a work of beauty, not as a structure of ingenuity. The simplest impressions from nature are the deepest and most devout: and to get back to these, after spoiling the vision with the artificial glasses of Science, is the difficult wisdom of the pure heart. The modest flower, nestling in the meadow grass; the happy tree, as it laughs and riots in the wind; the moody cloud, knitting its brow in solemn thought; the river, that has been flowing all night long; the sound of the thirsty earth, as it drinks and relishes the rain; these things are as a full hymn, when they flow from the melody of nature, but an empty rhythm, when scanned by the finger of art. The soul, as it sings, cannot both worship and beat time. The rainbow, interpreted by the prism, is not more sacred, than when it was taken for the memorandum of God's promissory mercy, painting the access and recess of his thought. The holy Night, that shows us how much more the sunshine hides than it reveals, and warns us that the more clearly we see what is beneath our feet, the more astonishing is our blindness to what is above our heads, is less divine, when watched from the observatory of science, than when gazed at from the oratory of private prayer. To the one it is the ancient architecture, to the other the instant meditation

of the Most High. And so is it with all the common features of our world. The daily light, fresh as a young child every morning, and dignified as the mellowness of age at even ; the yearly changes, less fair and dear to our infancy than to our maturity,—the weariness of nature as she drops her leaves, the glee with which she hangs them out again,—the silver mists of autumn, the slanting rains of spring, the sweeping lines of drifted snow ; all are as the natural language of God,—the turns of his Almighty thought,—to the spirit that lies open to their wonder : to others, they are but a spinning of the earth, an evaporation of the waters, an equilibrium in the winds.

It is the same in the case of human life, as in that of the outward world. There also our knowledge does not represent God's ways ; our knowledge being a critical deduction of rules which his ways indeed have furnished but did not follow. There also we should think of him, not as constructing mechanically for an end, but creating spontaneously from himself. In our review of ancient or modern nations, we are anxious to account for the peculiarities that mark them, and the influence they have had upon mankind ; and we search their climate and geography, their inheritance of language and tradition, their relative position and experience, for the causes of their special genius and institutions. And such enumeration is invaluable in its fruits of practical and political wisdom. Only let us not imagine that God works by the sort of composition of causes, which our poor intellect is obliged to fancy to itself. He did not model *the Hebrew*, or fabricate the Greek, after the fashion of

our historical analysis, saying to himself "This climate will do, but then it must have that organization, and be mixed with such and such sort of memories." It were contemptible to think that he thus moulds and serves up the nations, like one that holds a receipt-book in his hand. And so too with the individual mind. Philosophy, justly curious to observe the structure of our faculties, and the nature of those wondrous operations by which man alone, of all creatures, has acquired a history, endeavours to untwine the finished web of thought, and lay out the variegated filaments,—the warp of constant nature, and the woof of flying experience,—from which the texture seems to have been composed. And this also is well: opening to us the deepest problems and yielding many useful lessons. Only we must not suppose that God makes men after the pattern of Locke's or Mill's human nature; providing the raw material of so many simple ideas, with measured lots of pleasure and pain, to be mixed up into a Plato, or fused down into a Channing. Nor ought we to think that he preconceives a particular task to be accomplished for the world, and then proceeds to make and move men, like fitting puppets, to perform it. The souls of the Sons of God are greater than their business; and they are thrown out, not to do a certain work, but to be a certain thing; to bear some sacred lineaments, to show some divine tint, of the Parent Mind from which they come. The mighty spirits of our race are as the lyric thoughts of God that drop and breathe from his Almighty solitude;—transient cords flying forth from the strings as his solemn hand wanders over the possibilities of beauty. One only

finished expression of his mind, one entire symmetric strain, has fallen on our world. In Christ, we have the overflowing Word, the deep and beautiful soliloquy, of the Most High; not his message and his argument,—for in that there were no Religion,—but the very poetry of God, which could not have been told us face to face, but only cast in meditation upon the silence of history. Not more certainly do we discern in the writings of Shakspeare the greatest manifestation of human genius, than in the reality of Christ the highest expression of the Divine. Not more clearly does the worship of the saintly soul, breathing through its window opened to the midnight, betray the secrets of its affections—than the mind of Jesus of Nazareth reveals the perfect thought and inmost love of the All-ruling God. Were he the only-born,—the solitary self-revelation,—of the Creative Spirit, he could not more purely open the mind of Heaven: being the very Logos,—the apprehensible nature of God,—which, long unuttered to the world, and abiding in the beginning with him, has now come forth, and dwelt among us full of grace and truth.

THE END.









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